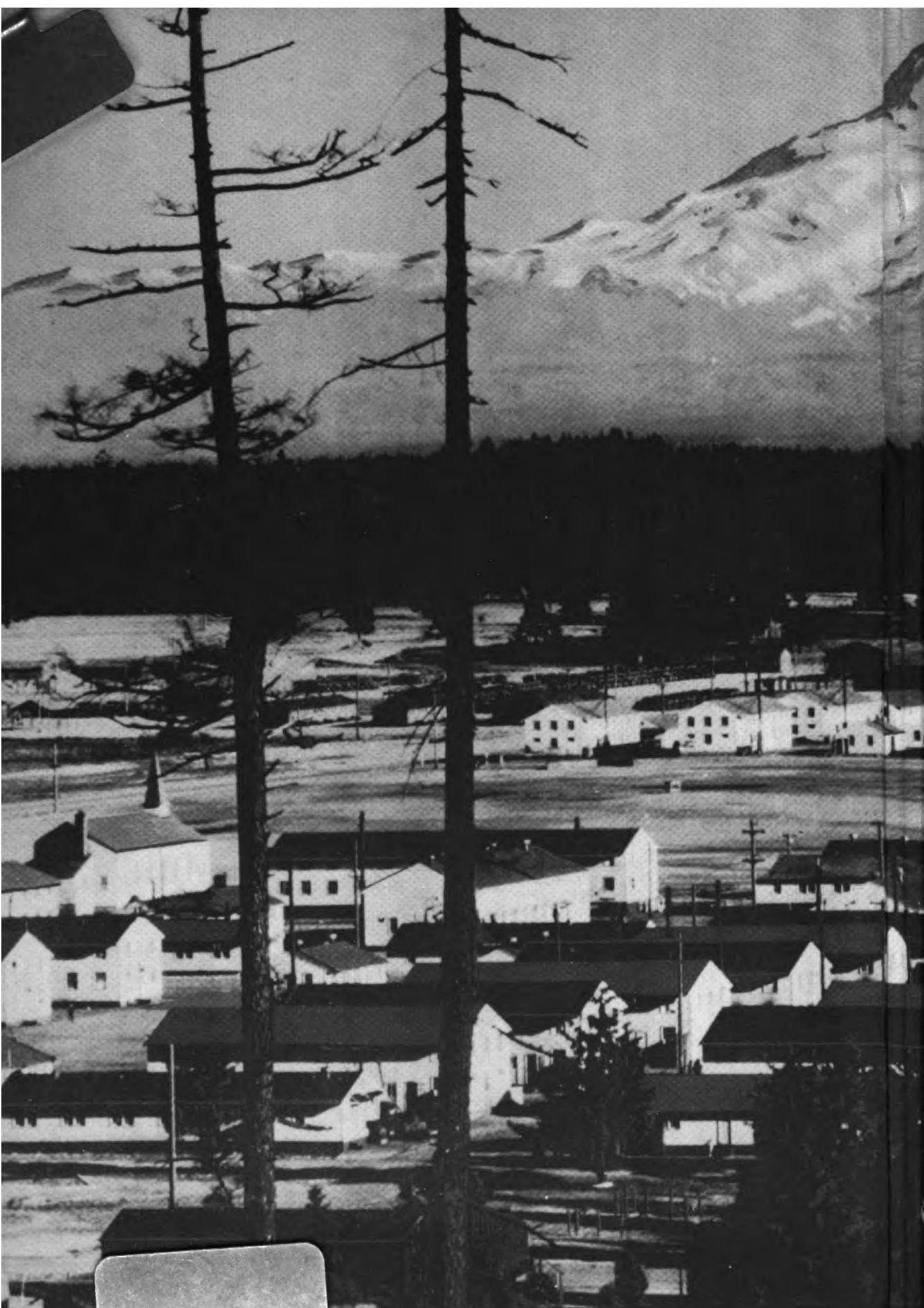


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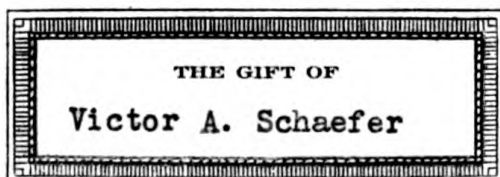
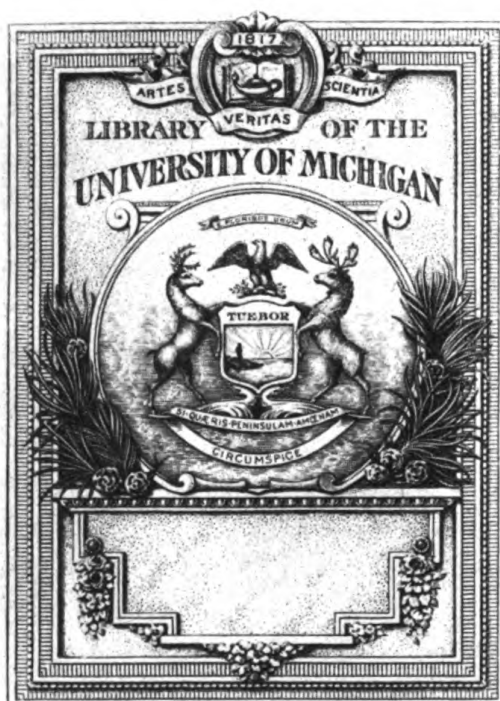




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## THE GOLDEN CROSS





NEW GUINEA



LUZON



# The Golden Cross

*A History of*  
The 33d Infantry Division  
*In World War II*



*By*

THE 33D INFANTRY DIVISION  
HISTORICAL COMMITTEE

*U.S. Army 33d Division*

WASHINGTON  
INFANTRY JOURNAL PRESS

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iv



TO THOSE WHO DIED IN SERVICE  
WITH THE 33<sup>D</sup> INFANTRY DIVISION

# Contents

Acknowledgments .....	xix
<i>Chapter 1:</i> The Old Guard .....	1
<i>Chapter 2:</i> Stateside .....	7
<i>Chapter 3:</i> Hawaii .....	21
<i>Chapter 4:</i> New Guinea .....	37
<i>Chapter 5:</i> Morotai: Jungle War .....	68
<i>Chapter 6:</i> Luzon .....	87
<i>Chapter 7:</i> Introduction to the Hills .....	94
<i>Chapter 8:</i> Initial Actions of the 123d Infantry .....	117
<i>Chapter 9:</i> Action on Kennon Road.....	135
<i>Chapter 10:</i> End Run Through Bauang .....	163
<i>Chapter 11:</i> Galiano and the Asin Tunnels .....	177
<i>Chapter 12:</i> Pugo to Tuba: The High Road .....	201
<i>Chapter 13:</i> On to Baguio .....	225
<i>Chapter 14:</i> Skyline Ridge .....	247
<i>Chapter 15:</i> Dingalan Bay Task Forces .....	283
<i>Chapter 16:</i> The Mountain Trail .....	299
<i>Chapter 17:</i> Rest for the Weary .....	328
<i>Chapter 18:</i> Partners in Battle.....	347
<i>Chapter 19:</i> Occupation .....	359
Battle Deaths .....	382
Decorations .....	388
Distinguished Unit Citations .....	397

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814  
Victor A. Schaefer  
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## Maps

1: Island of Maui .....	22
2: Island of Kauai .....	23
3: New Guinea .....	38
4: C Company Patrol to Sawar Drome .....	58
5: Operation King I .....	66
6: Morotai .....	70
7: Seizure of Hill 40 .....	75
8: Division Line on 15 February 1945 .....	86
9: Bench Mark and Question Mark Hills .....	98
10: The Fall of Question Mark .....	114
11: Envelopment of Hills X and Y .....	130
12: Drive Along Kennon Road: Phase One .....	134
13: Drive Along Kennon Road: Phase Two .....	158
14: 130th Infantry "End Run" .....	162
15: Seizure of Bauang .....	170
16: Attack Through the Galiano Valley .....	178
17: 130th Infantry "Merry-Go-Round" .....	194
18: Capture of Asin Tunnels .....	198
19: Pugo-Tuba Advances of 123d Infantry .....	202
20: Hill 3000 .....	210
21: Final Assault on Baguio .....	226
22: Zebra Force on Mt. Bilbil .....	244
23: Reduction of Skyline Ridge .....	248
24: Action West of The Gap .....	262
25: Dingalan Bay Defenses .....	290
26: Attack Along the Mountain Trail .....	322
27: The Battle for Baguio .....	330
28: Operation Olympic .....	358
29: Division Occupation Stations .....	368





*Major General P. W. Clarkson*

## HEADQUARTERS 33D INFANTRY DIVISION APO 33

*To the Members of the 33d Infantry Division:*

It is with a feeling of great pride, but also with a feeling of regret, that I send this message to the members of the 33d Infantry Division for inclusion in the record of their war service. I am proud of the outstanding combat accomplishments of the men of the Golden Cross Division but feel regret that this group of superb soldiers will never again assemble as a unit. The 33d Infantry Division of World War II can live again only in our memories, and it is the purpose of this book to record those memories.

Although the 33d Division went through many disheartening pre-combat experiences, waited long for an opportunity to demonstrate its fitness for combat operations, it never lost esprit and always cheerfully and efficiently completed every task assigned to it.

After a taste of jungle fighting in the Toem-Wakde area in New Guinea and on the island of Morotai in the Netherlands East Indies, the 33d Division landed on Luzon a seasoned fighting team.

Without any special mountain equipment or training, the Division fought gallantly through the Caraballo Mountains in Northern Luzon. Its performance was constantly a source of great pride to me—in fact, to every man in the Division. No unit ever failed to take its objective. No unit was ever behind schedule. Casualties were remarkably light. The members of the 33d had learned to be smart fighters.

In recalling the accomplishments of our Division, let us think of our comrades who gave their lives for their country. Let us pledge ourselves, in their memory, to carry on to preserve the peace for which they died.

My best wishes go to you for your future success and my confidence is in you now that you will do your part for the United States in peace as you did in war.



P. W. CLARKSON  
Major General, U.S. Army  
Commanding



*General of the Army Douglas MacArthur*



**GENERAL HEADQUARTERS  
SUPREME COMMANDER FOR THE  
ALLIED POWERS  
OFFICE OF THE SUPREME COMMANDER**

No finer Division has ever fought than the 33d. Its record is long and honorable and fills all Americans with pride and gratification. My confidence in it during the vicissitudes of campaign was complete and it never failed me.

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Douglas MacArthur". The signature is written in dark ink and is positioned above a horizontal line.

DOUGLAS MACARTHUR



*General Walter Krueger*

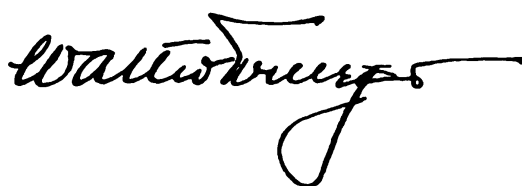
**HEADQUARTERS SIXTH ARMY**  
**OFFICE OF THE COMMANDING GENERAL**

*To the Members of the 33d Infantry Division:*

All of you may look back with justifiable satisfaction and pride upon the part played by your Division in the stirring events in the Southwest Pacific Area during World War II, ever remembering with deep reverence your heroic comrades who made the supreme sacrifice.

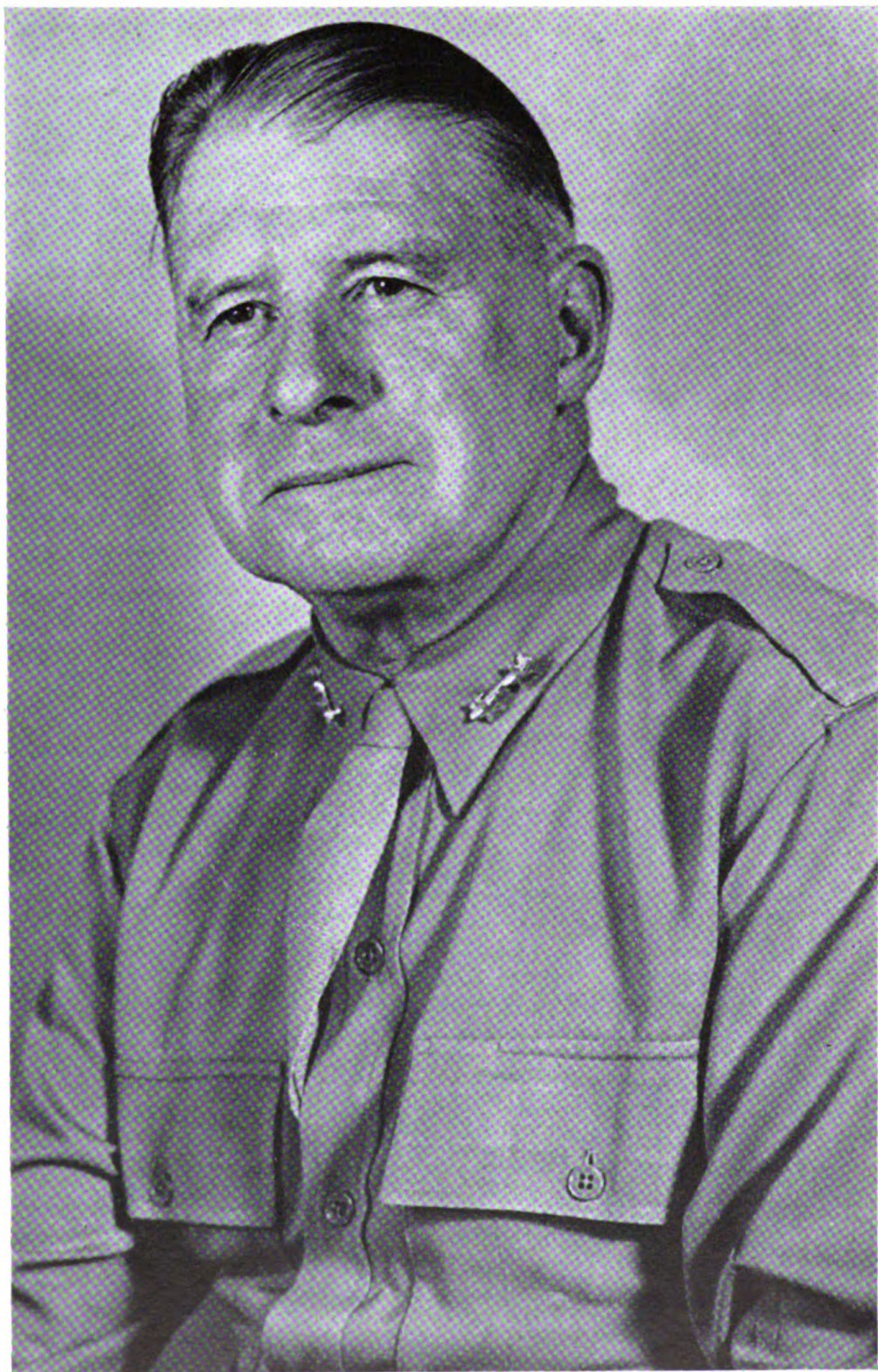
The skillful conduct of the Division and the gallantry and devoted services of its members during the Luzon campaign contributed materially to the success of that campaign, this fine record being further augmented by the exemplary performance of the Division in the occupation of Japan.

I am proud, indeed, to have had your Division under my command as part of the Sixth Army, and shall always treasure my association with you.

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Walter Krueger" in a cursive style, with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

WALTER KRUEGER  
General, U.S. Army





*Major General Innis P. Swift*

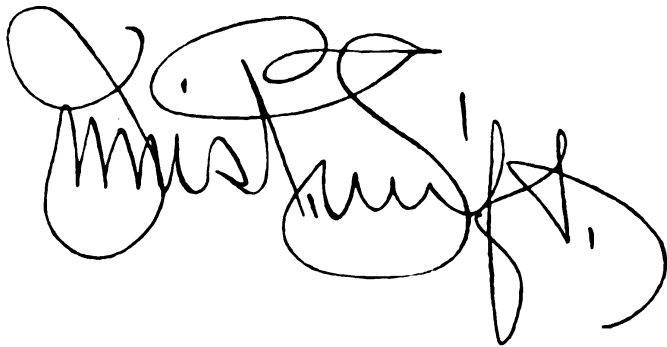
**HEADQUARTERS I CORPS**  
**OFFICE OF THE COMMANDING GENERAL**

*To the Veterans of the 33d Infantry Division:*

You may well be proud of your service in World War II, especially of such hard fought battles as those in the mountains of Northern Luzon.

I shall always esteem it one of the most fortunate experiences of my military career to have had the Thirty-Third Division as a part of the I Army Corps. The Division was assigned a difficult task; but because of the unsurpassed spirit of every member in the Division, the outstanding leadership, down to include subordinate units, all missions were accomplished in a most commendable manner.

The mention of the Thirty-Third Division or any World War II member thereof will bring with it an inexhaustible assemblage of grand and beautiful associations.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Innis P. Swift', with a large, stylized flourish at the end.

INNIS P. SWIFT  
Major General, U.S. Army



*Manuel Roxas, late President of the Philippines*

**MALACANAN PALACE**  
**MANILA**

*Greetings to the 33d Infantry Division:*

I feel privileged in acknowledging my people's obligation to the 33d Infantry Division for its magnificent role in the liberation of the Philippines, particularly in freeing Baguio from the hands of the enemy. Personally, I feel equally and deeply beholden for its effective and generous assistance during my escape from the enemy in that city preceding its liberation. I salute the gallant officers and men of this Division for their splendid performance and for the heroism with which they upheld in line of duty the highest traditions of the United States Army.

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Manuel Roxas". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a large initial 'M' and 'R'.

MANUEL ROXAS





# Acknowledgments

To *Captain Sanford H. Winston* who, with exceptions noted below, wrote, edited and prepared the entire manuscript for printing and represented the Historical Committee in connection with all arrangements with the publishers.

To *Colonel Andrew T. McAnsh*, Division Chief of Staff, who supplied much operational background and who advised and assisted Captain Winston throughout the preparation of the manuscript.

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To *Major Robert V. Connolly* for volunteering a record of his Dingalan Bay Task Force.

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To *Master Sergeant Robert C. Tourt*, who prepared all of the maps.

To *Colonel Jacob Arvey* of Chicago, whose advice and assistance made possible the publication of a 33d Division history.

To a number of patriotic business firms and individuals of Chicago, Illinois, who provided financial assistance which has made possible the presentation of a copy, free of charge, to the nearest of kin of each member of the 33d Division who was killed in action or died of wounds.

P. W. CLARKSON  
Major General, U.S. Army



## Chapter I: The Old Guard

**A** LONG record of outstanding service and devotion to home and country has characterized the 33d Infantry Division since 1812, when its forebears, the first settlers to brave the dangers of the prairies, were organized into the provincial militia of Illinois. From then on, every turbulent phase of America's development as a world power has seen Illinois troops in action. Prairie Staters formed an integral part of the Nation's force in 1812; played a major role in winding up the Indian campaigns; beat the Philippine bush in 1898 to quell the Insurrection; chased the notorious Mexican bandit, Pancho Villa, the length of the Rio Grande; and helped crush the World War I model of the Wehrmacht in 1918.

Troops of World War II's Golden Cross Division inherited a priceless tradition of aggressive action and group fortitude from their World War I predecessors. The original 33d, activated at Camp Logan, near Houston, Texas, in the fall of 1917, earned praise on its combat record from every Allied command with which it was associated. Great Britain, Belgium, France and Italy expressed appreciation for the Division's military achievements. The United States was no less grateful. General of the Armies John J. Pershing, commander of the American Expeditionary Forces, paid a soldier's tribute to men of the 33d with one simple sentence which capped a Division commendation: "The 33d Infantry Division was still advancing when hostilities ended with the Armistice."

It is futile to attempt to embellish the Division's World War I record. Military histories carry in sober records the gallantry of the Illinoisans: successful campaigns at Chipilly Ridge and the Hamel Woods, climaxed by the gigantic Meuse-Argonne drive; 9 awards of the Medal of Honor and 194 awards of the Distinguished Service Cross; in excess of 4,000 German prisoners taken; and finally, friendly casualties of 887 men killed in action with 5,499 wounded during four months of combat.

Major General George Bell, Jr., a Regular Army officer but an Illinoisan like the majority of his men, brought his Division home in May 1919. Tumultuous civic receptions greeted the Golden Cross on its return to Illinois. Chicago, home of most of its veterans, tendered a greeting that ranked with the news of the Armistice when it came to noisemaking. The Division was inactivated shortly thereafter, taking with it a final message from its commander which has a prominent place in its proud record. General Bell said: "The 33d Division accomplished every task assigned to it; often in less than the allotted time. Not a single failure is recorded against it; not a scandal has

occurred to mar the glory of its achievements. It is a record surpassed by none and equalled by few."

It was not until three years after the Armistice that the 33d Division was resurrected from the roster of defunct organizations. In order to prevent a repetition of one of the great tragedies of World War I—pitting half-trained troops against the cream of an enemy military machine—Congress passed the National Defense Act of 1920 providing for civilian components of the Army. A National Guard, composed of all state militias, and an Organized Reserve were created under the ægis of the War Department. Regular Army officers were detailed to act as instructors for the Guard. Standardized training schedules were handed down from the National Guard Bureau in Washington. Federal recognition came to Illinois in 1921 when numerous ground elements were organized under new tables of organization to constitute the new 33d Division.

Congressional intentions were of the best, but the passing of years with its subsequent talk of worldwide disarmament, saw military appropriations pared to the bone and the Regular Army reduced even beyond bare essentials. The start of the depression in 1929 cast a further pall over the National Defense program.

Illinois' Golden Cross Division experienced a stroke of rare good luck in the fall of 1933 when the War Department assigned it a new senior instructor. He was Colonel George Catlett Marshall, later to become Chief of Staff of the United States Army in World War II and Secretary of State in the Truman Administration. Colonel Marshall and Maj. Gen. Roy D. Keehn, 33d Division commander, combined to form a Regular Army-National Guard team which revitalized the Division. Marshall guided it to a state of efficiency it had never known before; General Keehn fought and won to secure adequate equipment and training facilities.

A book published in 1947, by William Frye, entitled *Marshall: Citizen Soldier* describes at great length Colonel Marshall's service with the Guard and General Keehn's efforts to restore it to a proper place in America's plan of national security. Excerpts follow:<sup>1</sup>

. . . But the division staff officers, nearly all of them prominent in business or the professions, suddenly realized that their somewhat desultory Monday night meetings had ceased to be the familiar, haphazard affairs of the past, that the entire staff had a goal in front of it, and each officer a definite job in which he was expected by Colonel Marshall to produce results. Even this

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<sup>1</sup>Used by special permission of the Bobbs-Merrill Company, publisher of *Marshall: Citizen Soldier*.

mature group felt its morale rise when, one Monday night, they came in to find that Marshall had persuaded Keehn to rent an additional room at headquarters on the 20th floor at 208 South LaSalle Street, and in the room was a desk for each staff officer, with a name plate on the desk.

Marshall realized that the officers needed some intensive training, and he resorted to the established Army device for use when there is nothing but officers, pencils, paper, maps, and telephone to work with—the Command Post Exercise. Soon after his arrival in Chicago, he had planned an elaborate map maneuver for the winter and the officers of the division worked their way through this problem, which for want of a better name was designated a War Game, on successive weekly drill nights over a period of about two months.

Keehn watched the development of this experiment in training with mounting enthusiasm. This Chicago lawyer had never had any military experience when Governor Horner of Illinois appointed him commander of the 33d Division—the governor knew Keehn, respected his judgment and administrative capacity, and regarded him as a personal friend; moreover, he wanted to escape what he was certain would be the political embarrassment involved in selecting either of two brigadier generals who were eligible. By the time Marshall arrived, Keehn had learned enough about military matters to know that his division was not all it should be; and when Marshall had been there a few months he was convinced that the 33d was well on the way toward being the best National Guard division in the United States.

Marshall's job involved the supervision of approximately 35 Regular Army officers and noncommissioned officers who were detailed as Guard instructors in Illinois, as well as the planning of the training program which they carried out. The Colonel was insistent upon strict discipline in the Guard units. He wanted the training, even if it could be only one night a week during most of the year and a two-weeks' camp in the summer, to be conducted in a smart military atmosphere, as business, not as fun. He appeared with Keehn before committees of the Illinois legislature, urging a more generous support of the Guard, and—after Keehn was elected president of the National Guard Association in October, 1934—he went to Washington to back a delegation seeking funds from the Federal government for construction of armories. On that trip in April, 1935, Keehn went first to MacArthur, outlining to the Chief of Staff the association's plans for new armories.

"That's fine," said MacArthur. "But come back next year—I'm trying to get an increase for the Regular Army this year."

"Well, that's fine," Keehn retorted, "but I won't be president of the National Guard Association next year. You don't mind if I try on my own?"

"No, go right ahead," replied MacArthur.

So Keehn went to President Roosevelt, and laid the request for Public Works appropriations for armories before the Chief Executive. Mr. Roosevelt was sympathetic, but why call them armories? After all, there was so much pacifism in the country that anything even smacking of military matters ran into immediate opposition in the Congressional committees. Why not call them "community centers"? Keehn recognized the touch of political shrewdness when he encountered it, and the armories were built as community centers. They were, be it said, larger and more elaborate than the National Guard required, and actually were used as community centers.

It was the training of the Guard to which Marshall devoted most of his attention, however, and he had the satisfaction of seeing his segment of the citizen army improve perceptibly under his sympathetic and skillful direction. In his second summer with the division, when the units went to Camp Grant for the summer encampment, he put them through a three-day maneuver at the end of the period—the first time the division had actually moved off the camp reservation for field exercises. The attack on "Riley's Ridge" near the Wisconsin state line ended about 7:30 one morning, and by 9:00 o'clock he had assembled the officers under a huge, makeshift canopy constructed of tent flies at the highest point on the ridge.

There he gave them a four-hour critique of the maneuvers they had just completed. Stenographers were there to take every word, and motorcycle couriers ran their notes to Camp Grant. There a written resume of Marshall's critique was prepared and mimeographed and by the time the troops marched back into camp, copies of the resume were ready for distribution to them. The Colonel wanted every man in the division to know what the purpose of the maneuvers had been, how the problem had been attacked and solved, what the shortcomings were—all the facts, and the reasons for them.

The climax of this training came in the summer of 1936, when the Second Army held maneuvers in Michigan. There the 33d Division learned from Marshall by opposing him. Marshall commanded a brigade which outmaneuvered the division he had trained in at least one major phase of the exercises, but the Colonel had the enormous satisfaction of seeing his training pay dividends in the highly competent staff work and operations of the Guardsmen.

Colonel Marshall's detail with the Division came to an end in 1936 when he was promoted to brigadier general and assigned a field command, but his teachings stayed long on the minds of Golden Cross leaders. Every member of the 33d, from General Keehn to the most obscure private, realized that the loss of Colonel Marshall carried with it the loss of one of America's truly great military minds.

General Keehn left the Division three years later when he was forced to relinquish active command, having reached the Army's mandatory retirement age of sixty-four. His successor was Brig. Gen. Samuel T. Lawton, who had commanded the 58th Field Artillery Brigade under Keehn. General Lawton—soon promoted to two-star rank—was a Golden Cross man of long standing. A prominent attorney in civilian life, he first enlisted in the Illinois Militia as a cavalryman in 1909. Commissioned in 1912, he rose to command of his troop which he led in the Mexican Border campaign of 1916. During World War I he changed from Cavalry to Field Artillery, serving as a major in the 122d Field Artillery Regiment during the fighting in France. He assumed command of the 33d Division Artillery in 1936.

With the outbreak of war in Europe in the fall of 1939, National





*Major General Samuel T. Lawton (right), Division Commander at time of federalization. At left is Brigadier General Diller S. Myers, commander of the 65th Infantry Brigade.*

Guard training became greatly intensified. America's production lines gradually began to turn out weapons and matériel for a slowly expanding Army. Congress reluctantly began to discuss compulsory military training. Membership in the Division swelled and drills and encampment held a new air of earnestness.

International affairs took a serious turn for the worse in 1940. In the Pacific, Japan continued to ignore the territorial integrity of the many small nations in Southeast Asia. Despite sharp American protests she continued to forge a ring of steel around the Philippines and the rich oil properties in the Netherlands East Indies. *Dai Nippon* was girding for a conflict with the United States. On the other side of the world the situation was no less tense. German U-boats, roaming the Atlantic sea lanes in underwater "wolf packs," sent thousands of tons of American shipping to the bottom of the ocean, killing American merchant seamen in the process. Congress acted once the die was cast. Monies were appropriated for a two-ocean navy. The expansion of national air power began. Selective Service became law and sixteen million Americans registered for the country's first peacetime draft. President Roosevelt issued an Executive Order calling the National Guard into Federal Service and dispatching it into the field for a twelve-month training period.

These far-reaching developments had an immediate effect on the 33d Division. Recruits thronged armories throughout Illinois, anxious to get in their year of training. Deadwood was eliminated and scores of junior officers were commissioned from the ranks. Mobilization plans were perfected so that the Division could assume its place in the United States Army as soon as ordered to do so by the War Department.

A new year came in and many of the National Guard infantry divisions were already in the field, scattered in posts throughout the United States. Golden Cross anxiety was finally allayed on 14 January 1941 when the State Adjutant General, Brig. Gen. Leo M. Boyle, received an Executive Order signed by President Roosevelt alerting the 33d Division for federal service. It read:

By virtue of the authority conferred upon me by Public Resolution No. 96, 76th Congress, approved August 27, 1940, and the National Defense Act of June 3, 1916 as amended, and as Commander in Chief of the Army and Navy of the United States, I hereby order into active military service of the United States, effective on dates to be announced by the Secretary of War, the following unit and members of the National Guard of the United States to serve in the active military service of the United States for a period of twelve months, unless sooner relieved.

*Unit:* 33d Infantry Division

Mobilization orders from Secretary of War Henry L. Stimson reached General Boyle in his office at Springfield on 7 February. M-day for the Division was set for 5 March 1941. The War Department communication was immediately speeded to Division headquarters in Chicago where Lt. Col. (later Colonel and Chief of Staff) Andrew T. McAnsh, G-3, received it and turned it over to General Lawton. Five days later the commanding general of the Golden Cross and his entire staff were sworn into active service to facilitate the transformation of twelve thousand Illinois Guardsmen into United States Army troops.

Camp Forrest, a new military reservation carved out of the heart of Tennessee's backwoods, was chosen by the War Department as the first training site for the 33d Infantry Division, Army of the United States.

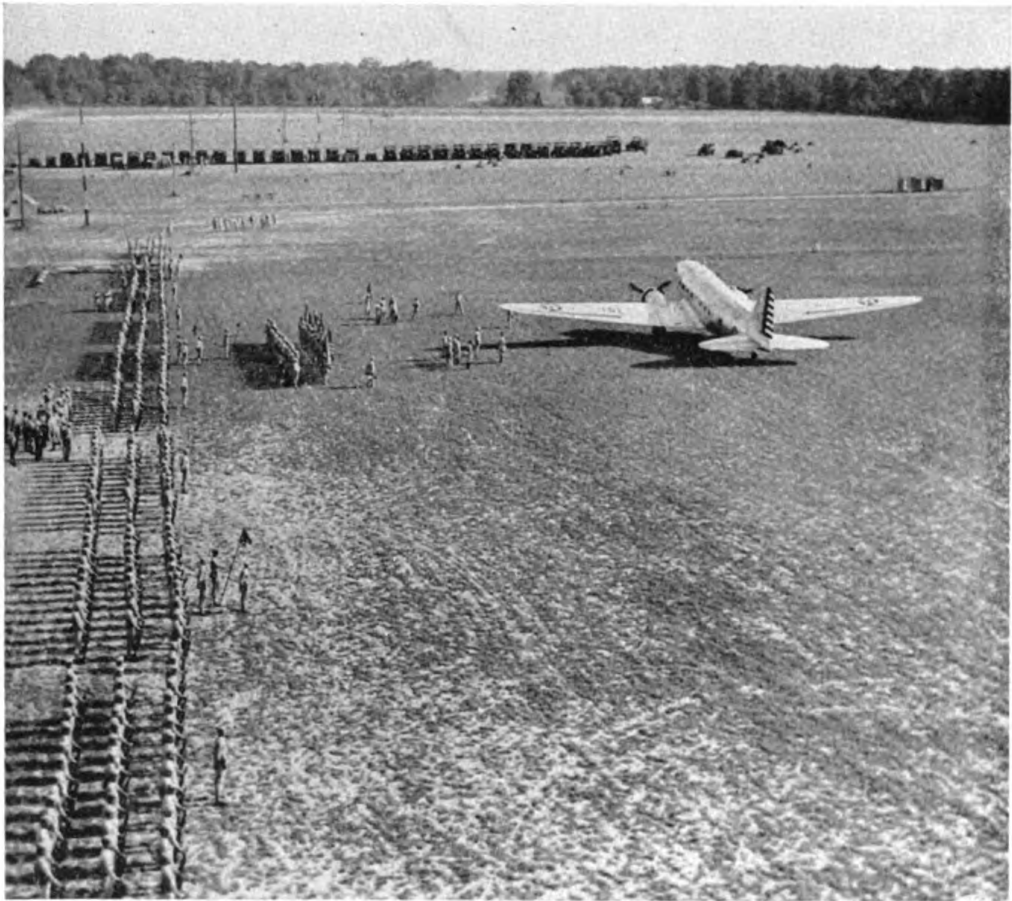
## Chapter 2: Stateside

M-DAY ushered in a period of feverish activity for the newly inducted Division. All of Illinois, and Chicago in particular, took on a military flavor it had not experienced since Armistice Day at the sight of thousands of uniformed Guardsmen thronging the downtown areas and Army vehicles of every description rolling along congested thoroughfares. In the first days following mobilization, speeches, parades and banquets became the orders of the day. However, once the general fanfare incident to the federalization of a local unit was done with, troop trains and motor convoys began the difficult task of transporting personnel and equipment to the Tennessee military reservation. It was not until two weeks after M-day that General Lawton was able to muster the entire 33d Infantry Division at a single location.

Camp Forrest—named in honor of Confederate General Nathan Bedford Forrest of “git thar fustest with the mostest” fame—was no more than a sickly looking conglomeration of wooden buildings marked in the center with a huge checkered water tower. Bare necessities, much less refinements, were lacking. Battery and company streets were sticky bogs of mud and the parade grounds were covered with pools of stagnant water. Recreation facilities were conspicuous by their absence.

General Lawton gave top priority to the improvement of living conditions. Seemingly overnight, barracks took on a new appearance of cleanliness, messhalls were polished until they could stand the most painstaking inspection, drainage ditches were dug to handle overflows of rain, boardwalks were laid the length of every unit street and ground was graded for use as athletic fields. Once Camp Forrest began to resemble a well manicured military installation, Division turned to the construction of training facilities. Field-firing and close-combat ranges were still to be built before the Golden Cross could embark on any phase of field training. Elements of the Division first began to function as military units on 31 March when all troops entered an intensified training program aimed at bringing the Golden Cross to a state of combat efficiency.

At this time there existed scant resemblance between this newly mustered division and the unit that later fought through the New Guinea and Luzon campaigns. In 1941 the 33d was a “square” division consisting of two infantry brigades, one field artillery brigade, and supporting service elements. Brig. Gen. Diller S. Myers commanded the 65th Infantry Brigade, composed of the 129th and 130th Infantry Regiments. Col. Cassius Poust and Col. Robert W. Davis led these



*Honor guard stands at parade rest as Secretary of War Henry L. Stimson arrives at Camp Forrest to inspect the 33d Division*

regiments. The 66th Infantry Brigade, headed by Brig. Gen. Albert L. Culbertson, coupled Col. John M. Richmond's 131st Infantry and the 132d Infantry under Col. LeRoy C. Nelson. Brig. Gen. Charles C. Haffner, Jr. (later a major general and commander of the 103d Infantry Division of the Seventh Army) commanded the 58th Field Artillery Brigade, made up of the 122d, 123d and 124th Field Artillery Regiments.

Filler replacements in the form of Illinois selectees arrived at Camp Forrest in early April and the Division was rapidly brought up to its authorized strength. Lt. Gen. Ben Lear's Second Army and the VII Corps, to which the Golden Cross belonged, now took an active interest in it. Once the new recruits had been put through a thirteen-weeks basic training grind, Army and Corps observers descended on Forrest to determine if the Division had arrived at General Lear's desired state of being "fit to fight." Corps ran its first tests in military proficiency in mid-summer of 1941. These exercises were Division-wide in scope,



*The main gate at Camp Forrest*

calling for demonstrations on the part of each incorporated arm and service.

Corps sent down a battery of observers well qualified to score and rate a platoon. Among them was the VII Corps Chief of Staff, Col. J. Lawton Collins—the same “Lightning Joe” Collins who rose to the rank of lieutenant general as VII Corps combat commander and later Deputy Chief of Staff of the U.S. Army as a four star general. Another inspector to achieve military prominence was the Corps G-3, Lt. Col. John R. Hodge. Lt. Colonel Hodge attained three-star rank and became a wartime corps leader. His was the XXIV Corps, conquerors of Okinawa and later the occupation force in Korea.

Infantry troops had been trained to a fine edge for these Corps-sponsored problems. Conditioning marches of up to thirty-five miles made most of the doughboys hard and durable. They were able to make long approach marches into tactical situations and go into the attack without rest or reorganization. Marksmanship was also of a high caliber. Once Division replacements had been taught the School of the Soldier and the rudiments of combat formations, they were turned out to the rifle range. To Corps’ practiced eyes, the physical condition, esprit, and tactical efficiency of Golden Cross rifle platoons immediately became apparent. Shortly after these tests were concluded, General Lear—an unannounced visitor at the post—declared that the 33d Division had topped the VII Corps in aggregate score, compiling a more formidable record than either the 27th or 35th Infantry Divisions.

In August the Division departed from Camp Forrest for the Arkansas-Louisiana maneuvers which pitted General Lear’s force against Lt. Gen. Walter Krueger’s Third Army. For eight solid weeks every meal eaten, every step taken, every word spoken and every mile driven was done under demanding combat conditions, save for a few brief





*Troops run the village course*

non-tactical interludes. Days on end were spent on the march or in the "attack;" nights usually passed in the shelter of water-filled slit trenches. Mock warfare made no impression on some, but to the majority, the opportunity to test oft-rehearsed combat range exercises against a "live" enemy was a welcome one. None relished the uncomfortable life but all profited by it in one respect: two months of field life had tempered a toughness of body into Division personnel that weeks of diabolically designed obstacle courses could not provide.

Training resumed when the Division returned to Tennessee on 9 October. But now, in place of the once-ceaseless squad and platoon drills, problems were being carried out at company, battalion and regimental levels. Fundamentals were not neglected as a small trickle of replacements continued to flow into camp, filling in for personnel who had been discharged, transferred or sent out on cadres. A pleasant interruption of work came on Armistice Day when General Lawton sent Golden Cross units back to the Prairie State to parade for the homefolk.

Resounding cheers and applause greeted 33d doughboys as they



smartly strode down broad Michigan Avenue, but through the din one could sense a disturbing aura of grimness which seemed to cast its shadow over both soldiers and civilians. It could be seen in the faces of spectators once a formation had passed and the following one was still several yards away. Cheers seemed to subside into thoughtfulness. Armistice Day of 1941 was definitely not a day for national celebration. American relations with the Axis powers were now close to the breaking point and each heated exchange of diplomatic notes only served to widen the breach. War was in the air, clear and unmistakable. .

Little more than three weeks later fears of an armed conflict were transformed into stark reality when the Japanese struck Pearl Harbor on 7 December 1941. Furloughed troops were immediately summoned back to Camp Forrest and all personnel were readied to move out of their Tennessee base at a moment's notice. Orders came through from Second Army at 0500 the following morning instructing the Division to combat-load and move to industrial centers in Tennessee and Alabama for anti-sabotage duty. Before nightfall 130th Infantry troops had thrown a cordon around the vital plants of the Aluminum Company of America at Alcoa, Tennessee, while other Golden Cross elements sped southward toward Birmingham and Montgomery manufacturing facilities.

After one month of factory, railroad, bridge and dam protection the Division was finally recalled to Forrest by General Lear. By this time the American situation in the Pacific was desperate and overseas commanders were clamoring for infantry units to stop the fast-expanding Nipponese. As soon as the troops were re-assembled in Tennessee, the 132d Regimental Combat Team was stripped from the Division and sent to New York for shipment to the Pacific. Four months later, in New Caledonia, the 132d RCT was incorporated into the now-famous Americal Division. Before the year was out it had been committed on Guadalcanal and other islands in the Solomons.

While the wound occasioned by the loss of the 132d Infantry was still unhealed the Division suffered a further depletion when the War Department "triangularized" the unit on 21 February 1942. Brigade echelons for both infantry and artillery were abolished. "Streamlining" became the military vogue and new tables of organization were authorized to allow greater striking power and mobility within a division. Three infantry regiments were now authorized instead of the four of the "square" division. Artillery, engineer, and medical regiments were cut to battalion size, and quartermaster regiments underwent the most serious slash, moving into the company class.



*Recruits for the 136th Infantry march to barracks from the Camp Forrest railhead*

Infantry elements of the 33d Division underwent no major changes except for the inactivation of the 65th and 66th Brigades. Separation of the 132d Infantry left the Golden Cross with the required number of infantry regiments. Division Artillery, however, underwent a complete metamorphosis. Each artillery regiment shrank to battalion size to meet War Department specifications, while the 2d Battalion of the old 122d Field Artillery Regiment became the newly activated 210th Field Artillery Battalion, commanded by Lt. Col. Ralph MacDonald. General Haffner was appointed Commanding General, 33d Division Artillery. General Myers—leader of the now-defunct 65th Brigade—moved into General Lawton's headquarters as the 33d's first Assistant Division Commander.

Once this sweeping reorganization was completed Division tried to settle back into its old training groove but higher headquarters was not yet finished shuffling its elements. In March the 131st Infantry was taken from Division control and sent to Sault Ste. Marie, Michigan, to guard the vital locks linking Lakes Superior and Michigan. The 131st was later disbanded without ever seeing overseas service. A new unit—the 136th Infantry, commanded by Col. William H. Draper, Jr.—was activated on 1 April to keep the 33d Division at three-regiment level. Colonel Draper, a prominent New York banker before the war, later became a major general and finally Under Secretary of the Army under James Forrestal, first Secretary of National Defense.

Shortly after the 136th came into being the Division underwent a change of commanders. General Lawton was assigned to a staff post in Washington on 29 April. His successor was Maj. Gen. Frank C. Mahin, a 55-year old infantryman. Twice gassed as a battalion commander in World War I, General Mahin brought to the Division a distinguished record of combat and peacetime service.

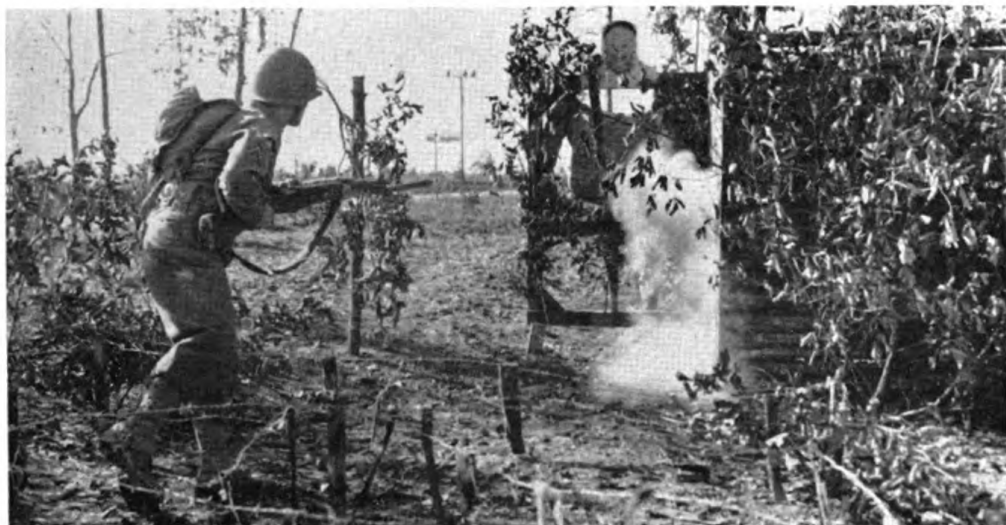


*Major General Frank C. Mahin*

More than three thousand raw recruits poured into Camp Forrest at this time to bring the 136th Infantry to peak strength. As soon as these men were quartered and oriented they embarked on the basic training phase. Civilian kinks and paunches were worked off on the march or in extended-order drills near Cumberland Springs. With two regiments at a high state of efficiency, Division naturally desired to bring the new regiment along as rapidly as possible. Preliminary rifle instruction came fast on the heels of the conditioning program, and Bearcat troops became qualified marksmen scarcely five weeks after making the transition from citizens to soldiers. Squad and platoon problems followed range work and by mid-July General Mahin was able to make favorable comparisons between the 136th and his other infantry regiments.

Just when it appeared that all units of the Division had reached a degree of training necessary for battle, ten weeks of hard work was voided through the loss of two thousand personnel from all arms and services. These men were dispatched to Camp Edwards, Massachusetts, where they made up the nucleus of the newly contrived Engineer Amphibian Command. Hundreds of them became members of the 1st, 2d and 3d Engineer Special Brigades, later veterans of every major American landing from Oran to Okinawa.

But the heaviest blow was yet to fall. On 24 July General Mahin



*An infantryman lunges at a Jap dummy on the Forrest close-combat course*

was killed in a plane crash while en route from Tullahoma to Fort Sill, Oklahoma, for an inspection of Division Artillery troops. News of this tragic accident saddened every man in the 33d Division. Although he had only been in command for a few short weeks, the General's keenness of wit, zest for living and aggressiveness had left their mark on his command. Two weeks later the new Division Commander, Maj. Gen. John Millikin, assumed leadership of the Golden Cross. Mild-mannered and scholarly in appearance, General Millikin—a cavalryman of long standing—brought to the Division a touch of verve and dash that seemed inherent in all of the old-time cavalrymen.

Before General Millikin could acquire more than a casual acquaintance with elements of his recently inherited combat teams, higher headquarters lopped off another sizable chunk of one of them. In late August Special Troops, Regimental Headquarters and the 2d and 3d Battalions of the 129th Infantry received a sudden alert for Pacific service as a separate task force. Ten days later these units shed the Division insignia they had worn for almost twenty-five years and were en route to the San Francisco Port of Embarkation. The 1st Battalion remained behind to cadre another regiment for the Division.

Like the 132d, the 129th got into the shooting war early. It was integrated into the 37th Infantry Division in 1943 while training in the Fiji Islands, and went through several tough campaigns with Maj. Gen. Robert S. Beightler's Buckeyes. Coincidentally, this regiment and its old Division crossed paths in Northern Luzon in 1945 when the 129th Infantry was attached to the Golden Cross for the final drive on Baguio. Before coming to the Philippines, the 129th had amassed a brilliant combat record in the jungles of Bougainville.

Now that the 33d was little more than a "skeleton" division, a certain listlessness crept into the old training routines. Before it had a chance to take root and grow, however, Second Army notified General Millikin in early September that his command had been transferred to IX Corps and was to proceed to a new station at Fort Lewis, Washington. Morale took an upward surge at this news and a fresh spirit became apparent during preparations for the trip across the country.

Immediately prior to leaving Forrest, a major command shake-up occurred within the Division. General Myers relinquished his post to take a War Department assignment with the National Guard Bureau and the Division travelled to Washington shy an assistant division commander. A namesake, Col. Donald J. Myers, assumed this duty eight days after the 33d's arrival at Lewis. He was promoted to brigadier general shortly thereafter. At the same time General Haffner was relieved from duty with Division Artillery to take over command of the newly organized 103d Infantry Division. Succeeding him was Brig. Gen. Alexander G. Paxton, a Mississippian who had entered active service with the 31st Infantry Division. Colonel Davis, who went through combat with the 130th Infantry in World War I, received a transfer to the Infantry Replacement Training Center at Camp Blanding, Florida, and was replaced by Col. Carleton Coulter, Jr.

Life at Lewis was a far cry from the Division's first days at Camp Forrest. Instead of a hastily constructed temporary cantonment, troops found a modern, attractive permanent Army installation equipped with decent living quarters and the utmost in training facilities. Barracks, kitchens and dayrooms had been left in immaculate condition by men of the 40th Infantry Division who had formerly occupied the areas now assigned to the Golden Cross. Towering Mount Rainier, more than fifty miles to the south, lent the post a distinctive beauty unmatched throughout the Southland. Crisp, invigorating Washington weather—with the exception of the inevitable early morning fog rolling in from Puget Sound—was far less exhausting than the hot, sticky Tennessee climate. From a recreation standpoint, the bustling cities of Olympia and Tacoma offered far more than sleepy hamlets like Tullahoma and Shelbyville.

Fortunes of the Division took a marked turn for the better within a few weeks after its arrival in the Northwest timberland. First came a morale-raising visit from President Roosevelt on 25 September, during which he inspected the post and reviewed elements of the 33d and 44th Infantry Divisions and the 87th Mountain Infantry Regiment. Equally encouraging was the receipt of orders three days later author-





President Roosevelt and General Millikin review the Division at Fort Lewis

izing the Division to activate another regiment of infantry. Known as the 123d Infantry, this regiment officially came to life on 28 September 1942 under the command of Col. Wilson McK. Spann. Both the 130th and 136th Infantry Regiments were tapped for the necessary commissioned and noncommissioned cadremen. Colonel Spann's tenure as regimental commander was brief, however. Ill health forced him to turn over command to Col. Paul C. Serff shortly after the 123d's activation.

Filler replacements poured into the Fort Lewis railhead throughout October, November and December. Special training battalions and companies were formed within each regiment and separate battalion to administer the primary phases of basic training to these troops while the Camp Forrest veterans moved on to more advanced tactical stages. Meanwhile, more than a hundred second lieutenants, all recent graduates of officer candidate schools, were assigned to the Division and used as platoon commanders for the new replacements. After several weeks of segregation, the training units were dissolved and a full-strength division finally began to function without the fear of higher headquarters making periodic raids upon it for personnel.

Army Ground Forces inspection teams visited Fort Lewis in January to test each infantry platoon in field firing problems. Division Artillery, then in bivouac at the Field Artillery Firing Center in Yakima, Washington, came in for an equally intense testing. Once these exercises were successfully completed, Division efficiency gradually progressed until entire regimental combat teams were committed on single problems. For the first time the doughboy began to realize that his M-1 was ineffective by itself yet all-powerful when coordinated with supporting arms and services.

In six months' time the Golden Cross had absorbed everything in the way of tactical knowledge that the lush evergreen forests of Washington had to offer. Consequently, IX Corps orders were issued on 11 March 1943 directing General Millikin to move the Division to the Desert Training Center in Southern California for an extended period of desert maneuvers. DTC headquarters allotted the 33d a mesquite-dotted area right in the midst of the dry Mojave sands. Needles, thirty-nine miles east of the campsite, was the closest town of any size. By the end of the first week of April, all elements had completed the rail movement from Fort Lewis and were under canvas in a gigantic desert bivouac called Camp Clipper.

After the luxury of Seattle and Tacoma, the Mojave seemed like Siberia to the men. Nights were frigid and the days were oven-hot.

Sandstorms periodically whipped through Clipper leaving behind a fine grit which became imbedded in food, bunks, wearing apparel and personal effects. Except for infrequent visits to the quartermaster-operated showers near Fenner, it was next to impossible to wangle an honest-to-goodness bath. Some men took to hitchhiking the five miles to the whistle-stop town of Essex where they paid hard cash for the privilege of invading private bathrooms. Bright lights could only be seen on weekends when motor convoys made the 252-mile trip into Los Angeles or covered the 125 miles to Las Vegas—fast dubbed "Lost Wages" by adventurous troops who had been forced to effect strategic withdrawals from the countless dice tables strewn about the city.

Desert training was strenuous from the beginning but it was as valuable as it was rough. Troops took on a physical toughness in a matter of days that enabled them to withstand long marches under the blistering sun. Climaxing the conditioning program was a two-day forced march which became compulsory for every infantryman in the Division: from Camp Clipper to Mitchell's Caverns, a 44-mile trek with every yard of it over loose sand. Water discipline, which came in for only passing notice at Camp Forrest and Fort Lewis, became a subject of great importance at the Desert Training Center. Clipper personnel carried one quart of water with them when they departed from their base camp for the field after breakfast. This had to last until the men returned to camp at suppertime although the mid-afternoon temperature consistently hovered around the 130-degree mark.

Infantrymen came to place great faith in the lensatic compass throughout desert maneuvers. On one problem, infantry platoons were dispatched into the sandy wastes for five days with only a single day's rations. Platoon leaders were given compass directions to their stopping point for the night, where the next day's rations could be located. One ate if he knew how to follow an azimuth. The self-reliance learned in the Mojave paid handsome dividends in the New Guinea and Luzon campaigns where small units were frequently sent out on week-long missions.

It wasn't all work at Clipper, however. Special Services partly compensated for the lack of nearby civilian entertainment facilities with a complete athletic program. Every company, battery and troop in the Golden Cross fielded a softball and volleyball team. Leagues were organized and playoffs held to determine the Division champions in both sports. Screen personalities were flown into Clipper from Hollywood every Sunday afternoon, and put on shows before outdoor audi-





*Aftermath of a Mojave sand storm*

ences often exceeding five thousand. Betty Hutton, Frances Langford, Pat O'Brien, Al Jolson and Jack Benny were among the many top-flight entertainers who played before Division personnel.

Shortly after reveille on 12 May all unit commanders received sudden notification that General Millikin desired to address all members of the Division that same afternoon at the outdoor theater. Word was rapidly transmitted to the troops and in a few short hours rumors of every description flooded the base. Finally, the time for the commanding general's talk neared and the entire Division—more than thirteen thousand strong—converged on the theater. The men could see their commander mount the huge stage, stride to a microphone in the center, adjust his eyeglasses and prepare to speak. Silence gripped the formation as General Millikin paused to look out at his audience. Then speaking slowly and in even tones he said, "The 33d Infantry Division has been alerted for a move overseas."

Surprise overcame discipline and prolonged gasps of disbelief rippled down the massed ranks. General Millikin stepped back and waited for the shock to subside, and then went on to admit that he was totally ignorant of the Division's ultimate destination. With that, and a few laudatory words on the excellent progress made in desert training, the General left the stage. This was the signal for regimental commanders to take over and march their units back to camp.

Army Regulation 380-5, "Safeguarding Military Information," was read and explained to all companies and batteries the next morning. No censorship of outgoing mail was due to begin until the Division

actually reached its Port of Embarkation, but long-distance telephone calls were monitored by specially briefed civilian operators. Packing and crating came next, and before very long all personnel were living out of their "A" bags. Immunization records underwent minute scrutiny and additional shots were given to men whose Forms 81 were incomplete. Then came the No. 1 bugaboo of the Armed Forces: the clothing inspection. They were so numerous and followed each other so closely that by the time all men were completely re-equipped inspecting officers could blandly recite the items on the Form 32 with all the fluency of a train-caller announcing the rush-hour schedule out of Pennsylvania Station.

In early June the first elements of the Golden Cross slated for shipment overseas broke camp in the Mojave and entrained for Camp Stoneman, California. By 27 June Clipper was totally deserted.

Authorities at Stoneman—final Stateside assembly point for Pacific-bound forces—checked the units through as soon as they reached the installation. Troops were given another opportunity to go out on the range and re-zero individual weapons. Last-minute physical examinations followed, and physically-unfit men were pried loose from Golden Cross control and transferred elsewhere.

Anyone who had visions of a World War I type of departure, complete with madly cheering mobs, a snappy parade, blaring bands and pretty girls was doomed to a sad surprise. Golden Cross men leaving on the Big Adventure were quietly awakened in the middle of the night and told to dress and assemble outside with full equipment as soon as possible. After a short orientation, delivered as they stood chilled and shivering, 33d Division personnel hoisted their bulky barracks bags to their shoulders and silently stumbled through the darkness to ferries waiting to take them to the San Francisco piers.

Colonel Coulter's 130th Regimental Combat Team was the first Division element to leave the continental limits of the United States, passing under the Golden Gate Bridge on 22 June aboard the U.S. Army Transports *Republic* and *Henderson*. Next ship to leave San Francisco was the *Ainsworth*, bearing companies of the 136th Infantry Regiment. Then, in rapid succession the *Brazil*, *Shanks*, *Hinds* and *Tyler* slipped away from their moorings with the remainder of the Division aboard and set their courses for the broad Pacific.

It was not until the ships were two days out of San Francisco that commanders made the official announcement to their men: "Destination: the Hawaiian Islands."

### *Chapter 3: Hawaii*

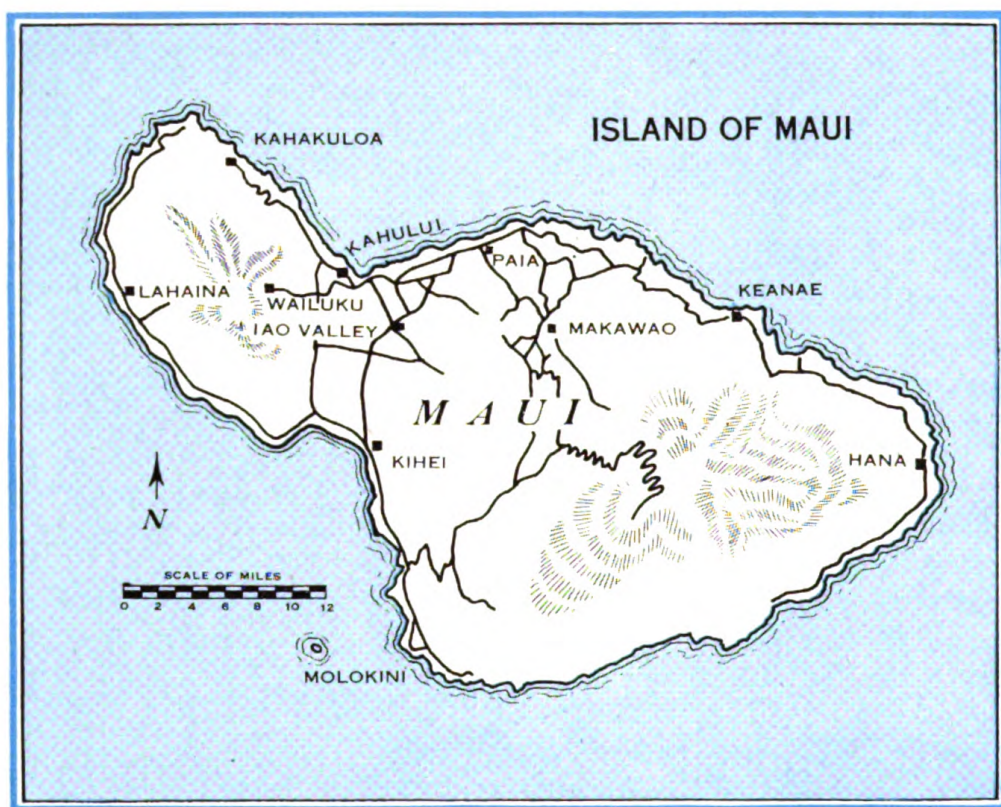
**M**OST of the glitter and luxury which had made Hawaii a mecca for vacationists in peacetime was missing on 15 July 1943 when the last Division troops to leave San Francisco debarked in the Islands. Now, Hawaii was the United States' principal Central Pacific base, seething with Air Forces, Army, Navy and Marine Corps personnel assembled for the inevitable westward drive. Martial law had been proclaimed shortly after the Pearl Harbor disaster and all Hawaiian-based units were given an active part in the Islands' defense. The main islands of the group each had their individual perimeters of barbed wire and machine-gun emplacements, and Navy vessels and air patrols drew a wide protective circle around the entire territory. Rigidly enforced blackouts with strict civilian supervision by the military emphasized the warlike atmosphere.

But not even a global conflict could completely conceal Hawaii's natural beauty. On Oahu, home of cosmopolitan Honolulu, Diamond Head continued to impress its majesty upon passengers sailing west from the mainland. However, adjacent Waikiki Beach, covered with a maze of barbed wire and unsightly beach obstacles, mutely notified newcomers that Oahu's status as a playground had temporarily changed. Maui's Haleakala, the world's largest extinct volcano, lent a grandeur to that island that war could not defile. On Hawaii, the "Big Island," sheer splendor radiated from Rainbow Falls, and graceful Mauna Loa towering 13,686 feet above the city of Hilo. Waimea Canyon on Kauai transformed a piece of the "Garden Isle" into a facsimile of Colorado's Rocky Mountains.

In keeping with their surroundings, the people of the Hawaiian Islands were an exotic strain. Although pure Hawaiians were in the minority, the merging of Chinese, Japanese, Polynesian, American, Portuguese and Spanish strains had produced an individual and distinctive people, a mixture of East and West.

Golden Cross troops did not have a chance to become thoroughly acquainted with this strange, yet familiar land until the entire Division was assembled in the Territory. Once this was accomplished the 33d received orders from the Hawaiian Department to assume the defense of the outer islands of the group. General Millikin, Division Special Troops, Divarty Headquarters and the 123d RCT occupied the island of Kauai. Colonel Coulter's 130th RCT went to Hilo for the defense of Hawaii, and the 136th RCT deployed on Maui, where General Myers was assigned as island commander. A single infantry battalion, the 1st, under Lt. Col. Lyman O. Williams, was sent to Molokai. Small detachments covered Lanai and Niihau.



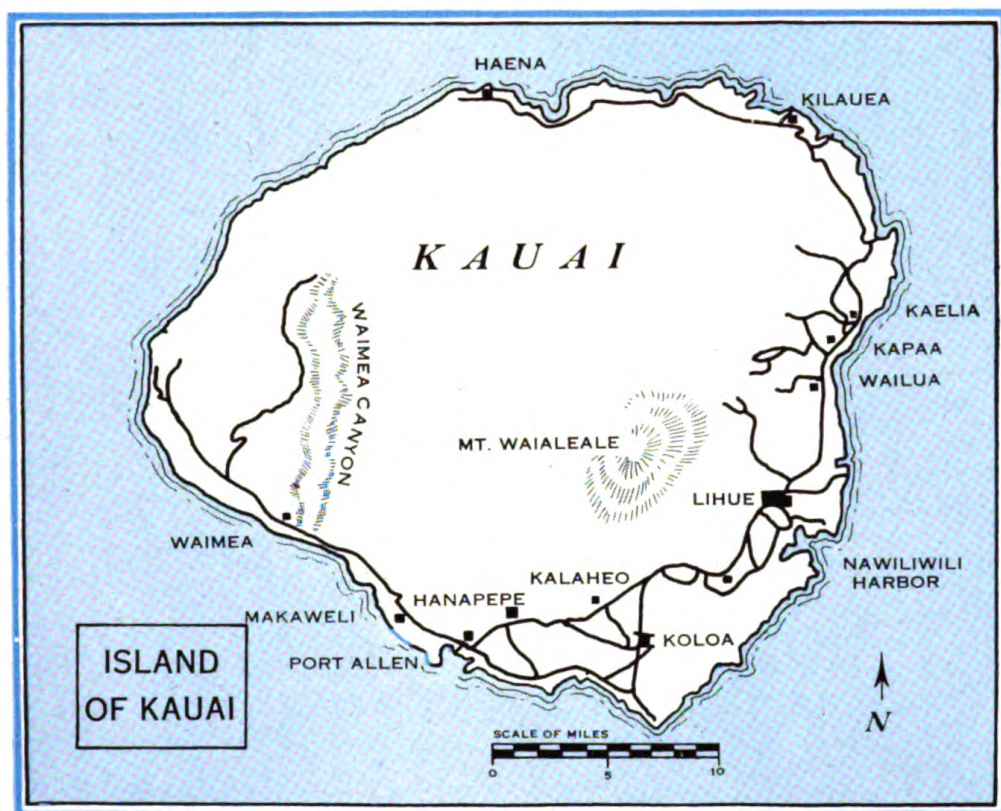


Map 1

Upon reaching their areas, the three RCTs learned that proper conduct of the mission demanded that each large command be broken down still further. Island defense was held so imperative that it superseded training and other unit functions. Consequently, battalions and companies were cut up into small detachments which fanned out over the islands to protect vulnerable beach areas, ammunition dumps and other important installations. Individual platoons and even single squads were forced to function as independent, self-sufficient units, their only contacts with higher headquarters being by telephone, radio or motor messenger. Housing, feeding and practically every phase of administration became the responsibility of junior officers, platoon sergeants and squad leaders.

A good illustration of how completely a small unit could be divorced from its parent organization lies in the experience of one rifle platoon of Company C, 136th Infantry. As part of the 1st Battalion, this platoon shipped from Maui to Molokai with the rest of its company. Once ashore at Kaunakakai the unit was loaded aboard a small motor yacht and ferried to Lanai, a little island separated from Molokai by a wide channel. The Molokai-Lanai trip consumed ten hours. On Lanai the platoon leader relieved another unit of comparable size and





Map 2

combined his men with a handful of air-raid warning personnel to form the entire American garrison on the island. Senior officer of United States' forces on Lanai was an infantry first lieutenant. Two months passed before his men were relieved from this duty and permitted to rejoin the 1st Battalion on Molokai.

At this time a unique command situation existed within Lt. Gen. Robert C. Richardson's Hawaiian Department. His headquarters on Oahu had split up the Territory into several "districts," each composed of a single large island or two smaller ones. Commanders for these districts were selected by the department and given the sole mission of maintaining Hawaiian defenses. Troops within these districts, regardless of unit, came under the control of island commanders. General Millikin was responsible for Kauai and General Myers had control of Maui, but elsewhere Golden Cross men operated under Hawaiian Department authorities. This unusual chain of command, formulated to give a degree of permanency to the various district headquarters, stripped the Division of much of its autonomy.

Training was not resumed until all elements of the 33d Division had been made familiar with their role in the prosecution of the mission. Battalion and company commanders were given map orientations,

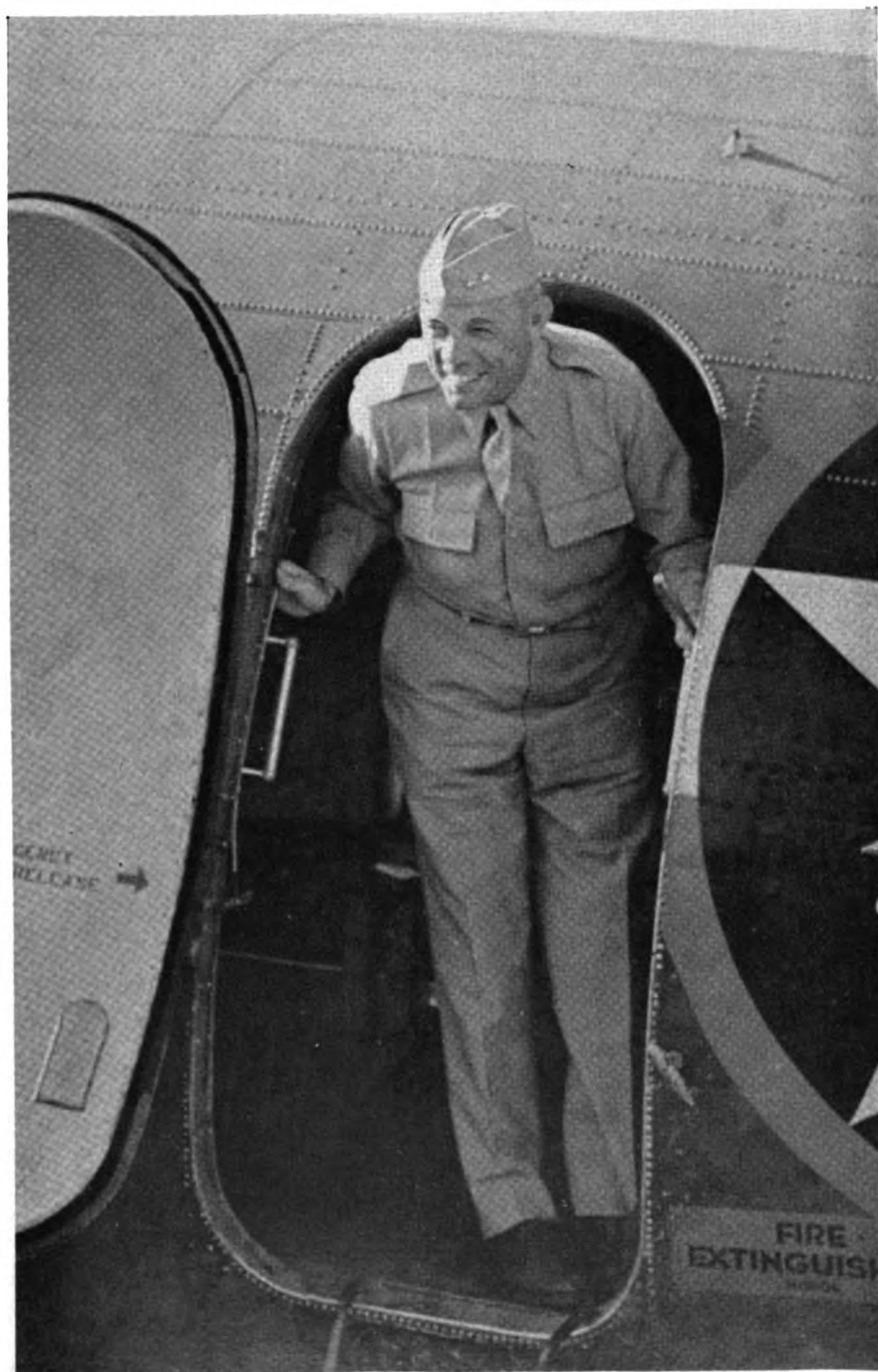
and then conducted on island-long reconnaissances in the company of district personnel. Each district then called a series of dry-run alerts which sent troops scurrying from their base camps to beaches, ammunition dumps and assembly areas. Within a few weeks companies aroused in the middle of the night by a district alarm could dress, secure equipment and clear their camps in less than three minutes. As soon as each district was satisfied with Division performances on these moves, emphasis shifted from island defense to training.

Hawaii offered the Division everything in the way of different types of terrain for the conduct of tactical exercises. Each island held tracts of low, rolling hills for normal maneuvering, countless broad landing beaches for amphibious training, towering ridges for practice in mountain warfare and dense, dank jungles for familiarizing troops with ground typical of the Southwest Pacific. District headquarters had no hand in preparing training doctrines or supervising Golden Cross men in this phase of their work. All 33d units functioned under schedules and memoranda sent down by Division headquarters. Despite the fact that infantrymen were spread over four different islands, each regiment trained on an identical level.

Now that Golden Cross personnel had accustomed themselves to the new defense-training routine, their activities in the Hawaiian Islands took on an aspect not unlike garrison life on the mainland. While quarters did not match those of Stateside posts, they were still adequate. Food was of much the same quality as it had been at Camp Forrest and Fort Lewis. Many companies embellished Army fare with sea food furnished by men on pass. After the Division had spent several months on the Islands, the threat to Hawaii's security greatly diminished and the percentage of troops permitted to be absent from camp was increased considerably.

There was no dearth of places to go. Kauai had the plantation towns of Lihue and Waimea, and on Maui, Wailuku was a city similar in size to Tullahoma, Tennessee. Men of the 130th RCT converged on Hilo, second largest city in the Territory. Even on desolate Molo-kai—site of one of the world's largest leper colonies—Kaunakakai offered a few urban comforts. A smattering of more fortunate persons received short furloughs to Honolulu.

In October the Division underwent its last change in command until after V-J-day. In recognition of General Millikin's noteworthy work in bringing the Golden Cross to a combat peak, the War Department ordered him to return to the United States and assume command of III Corps with headquarters at Atlanta, Georgia. His successor,



*General Millikin leaves Kauai to assume command of III Corps*

Maj. Gen. Percy W. Clarkson, reported to the Hawaiian Department on 18 October and was immediately assigned as Commanding General, 33d Infantry Division.

A marked contrast existed between the old and new commanders. Where General Millikin presented a sober appearance, his successor looked as rugged and earthy as the plains of his native Texas. Erect and broad of shoulder, General Clarkson had about him a mien of quiet confidence. Not a stickler for formality, he embarked on a tour of the Islands shortly after his arrival on Kauai to meet his troops. Men of the Division took to General Clarkson on sight. They liked his aggressive air. When he spoke, always forcefully, the Division knew it had acquired a fighter.

General Clarkson brought twenty-seven years of military experience to the Golden Cross. Commissioned in the Infantry in 1916, a year after his graduation from Texas Agricultural and Mechanical College, he fought through World War I with the 26th Infantry, 1st Division, emerging as Captain Clarkson. His first postwar assignments included a round of service schools, capped by a tour on the War Department General Staff. Upon successful completion of the Command and General Staff School in 1928, the General moved to West Point where he spent five years as a chemistry professor at the Military Academy. General Clarkson returned to duty with troops in 1934 after a year at the Army War College. After a brief tour as Chief of Staff of the 36th (Texas) Division the husky San Antonian became Assistant Division Commander of the 91st Division with the rank of brigadier general. In December 1942 the 87th Division was activated and General Clarkson was named its first commanding general. A second star followed shortly. He relinquished command of the Acorn Division to come to Hawaii and take over the 33d.

Training had supplanted the defense mission almost entirely by New Year's Day of 1944, although many Division elements were still required to be on constant alert. One RCT, Colonel Coulter's 130th, had been shifted from Hawaii to Kauai in December and was actually engaged in training on a full-time basis. Kauai defenses continued to be manned by personnel of the 123d RCT, who alternated between defense and training. Successful invasion of the Gilbert Islands by the Marines with its accompanying dissolution of the Japanese threat to the Hawaiians, was chiefly responsible for this change in Division activity. The last fears of an enemy strike against the Territory were dispelled on 21 January when Marine and Army forces attacked the Marshall Islands. Once the Marshalls were secured the Division was





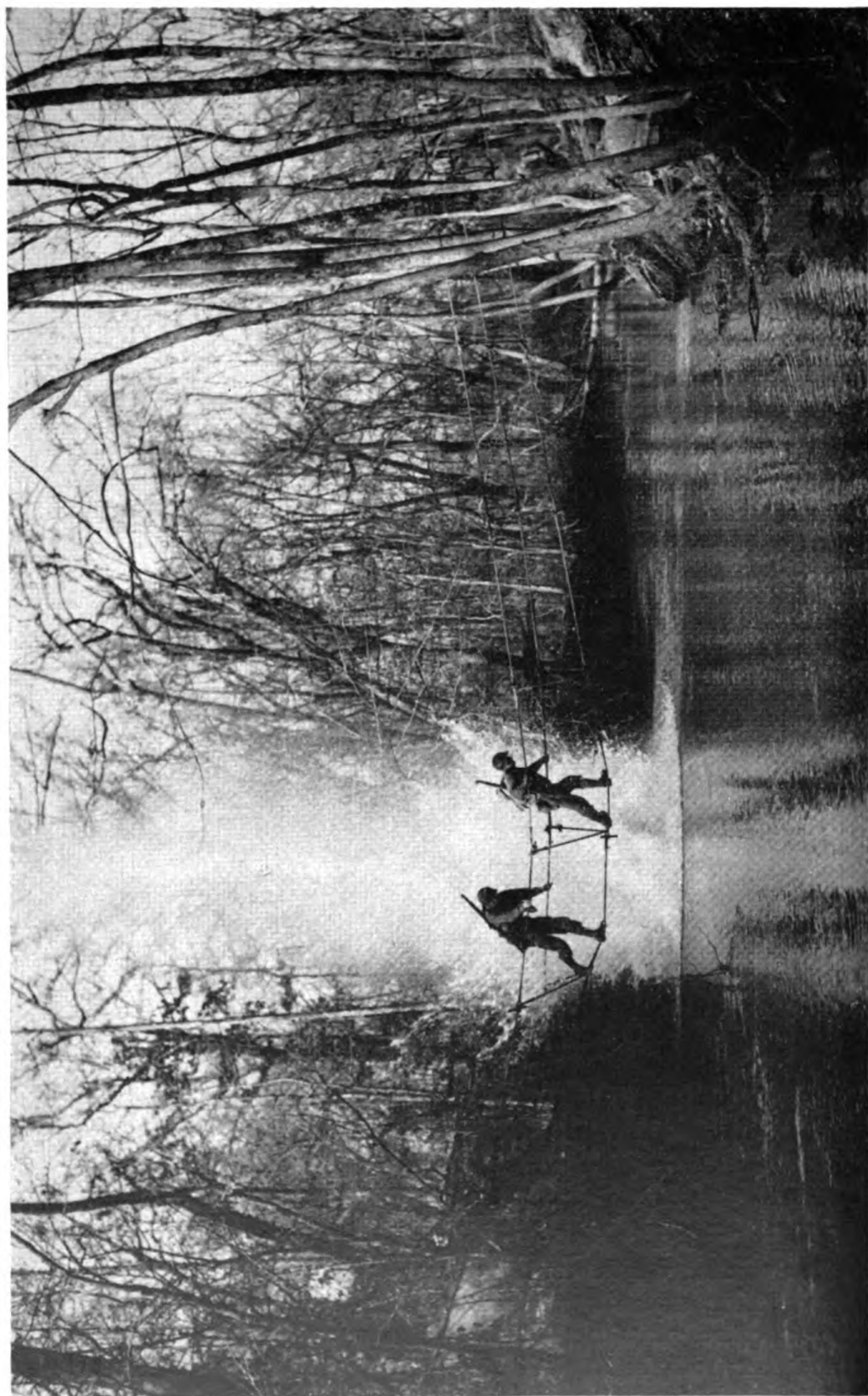
*Motor pool personnel of the 130th Infantry prepare to float a jeep across a Kauai stream*

permitted to lay additional stress on reconditioning its personnel. Several Golden Cross observers accompanied the assault waves in the landing on Kwajalein.

With all restrictions on its activities now removed, the Division was able to inaugurate several advanced training phases hitherto foreign to the men. First of these was an extensive program stressing living and fighting in the jungle. Locating proper training areas was simple. New Guinea-type vegetation was plentiful in the mountains of Kauai and Maui. Combat team commanders constructed jungle training centers in these areas, developed courses of instruction and provided an aggressive "faculty" capable of impressing their lessons upon the troops. In answer to the last requirement all division graduates of Lt. Col. Francois d'Eliscu's famous Ranger School at Schofield Barracks were recruited to head the teaching staff.

From their inception these training centers achieved excellent results. Infantrymen, soured from three years of constant training, expressed complete amazement at the new and boundless scope of this training phase. Many, with deep-seated fears that the jungle would deprive their individual and crew-served weapons of potency, were shown that "mid-range" weapons could perform efficiently despite the confines of the bush. Hip-firing ranges were built to demonstrate how effectively infantry arms could function in jungle surroundings. Each man was given several opportunities to hip-fire his rifle, the light and heavy machine guns and the Browning automatic rifle. Mortarmen learned that the light 60, without sight or base plate, was a formidable





*Jungle training in the Hawaiian Islands was rugged work*

jungle gun. Instruction by a detachment of engineers in the employment of various demolitions charges and the flamethrower completed the weapons phase.

Other courses included the destruction of enemy pillboxes, hand-to-hand fighting, combat-reaction problems, stream crossings and bayonet assault. High point of the Maui school's program was its demonstration of pillbox reduction. Doughboy observers marvelled at the tight coordination shown by the attacking "fire team." From the moment of contact with the "enemy" the team operated smoothly and confidently. First a small base of fire was established around the team's BAR and heavy fire directed against the emplacement's embrasure. Then, the leader took one rifleman, a demolitions man and a flamethrower operator out to one side and began to edge in from the flank. Fire continued to pour into the opening until the demolitions man worked in close enough and the flamethrower was poised to follow up. Suddenly all fire stopped, a dull *whoom!* sounded as the charge detonated inside the emplacement, and the flamethrower operator raced in to scorch the position.

Platoons and squads were separated into similar fire teams and coached in this one method of attack for hours on end. Experience gained here served the Division well more than a year later on Luzon where combat often was a matter of blasting one pillbox after another.

A postgraduate course in jungle warfare followed once all Division elements had cleared the training centers. Golden Cross engineers on Kauai and Maui built defense installations similar to the ones used by the Japanese in Southwest Pacific fighting. They selected commanding ground for the "enemy" positions and dug in log-reinforced pillboxes concealed by strips of blending foliage to cover all routes of approach. Rifle companies were brought to the base of the jungle-covered ridges, given a proper orientation and field order, and sent forward in the attack. An "enemy" detail armed with rifles and blank-firing machine guns actually defended the ground. Umpires travelled with the assaulting forces to measure advances and assess friendly and enemy casualties.

All phases of the problem were conducted under combat conditions. When an infantryman was "hit," medics had to crawl forward and administer on-the-spot aid. The only breaks taken were for the sole purpose of correcting flagrant errors. At dusk the companies were required to break contact, pull back into a perimeter, and adopt proper defensive precautions. Water, ammunition and rations were brought forward and distributed under tactical conditions.



*General Clarkson and Lieutenant Colonel Jacob M. Arvey (front) pose with USO troupers Ray Bolger and Little Jack Little*

These problems were of three-day duration. Once a unit had completed its attack, it was given a thorough critique of its actions. As part of the critique, troops retraced their route on the ground where umpires reconstructed the tactical situation and discussed different methods of successfully pressing forward. Often the conductor of the critique would place the attacking force in the same position it had occupied a day or two before and then request the "enemy" detail to emerge from its concealed pillboxes and foxholes. Most of the outfits were mortified to discover that at several phases in the problem they had been covered from all four sides simultaneously.

February of 1944 saw the 33d transfer its attention from jungle warfare to amphibious training, the most ambitious and advanced training assignment yet undertaken by the Division. Again personnel were transferred from barracks and defense outposts to specially equipped bases. On Maui the 136th RCT assembled under canvas at a huge camp near Kihei, and Golden Cross units on Kauai alternated at an amphibious training center at Port Allen. Each regiment and separate battalion was ordered to transplant its headquarters to the beach. Division insisted that cooks, company clerks, drivers, bandsmen, supply men and other rear-echelon personnel take this training with their units.

Amphibious training in the Hawaiian Islands was limited exclusively to shore-to-shore movements. As a result, troops became acquainted with only the LCVP (landing craft, vehicle-personnel) and the larger LCM (landing craft, medium). Battalions were organized into boat teams shortly after their arrival at the centers and all training was carried on at the boat-team level. Before setting foot in a landing craft, boat teams were thoroughly briefed in the fundamentals of amphibious exercises.

Artillerymen practiced loading and unloading their bulky howitzers from mock-up LCMs; drivers attended a waterproofing school at the center; and infantrymen sat through lengthy periods of instruction to learn how to clear the craft, deploy along the beach and reorganize inland once the sandy approaches had been negotiated. Every man in the 33d Division went to dry-land cargo nets where he was shown how to secure equipment so that his hands were free to grasp the ropes. Following that, instructors demonstrated the correct method of going over the side and then turned the troops loose on the nets.

With the basic phases past, boat teams took to the water. Carrying identifying placards, they were marched down to the dock by landing waves. Cargo nets were employed in descending from the dock to waiting craft. The Navy-manned boats then turned away from shore and headed four or five miles out to a rendezvous. First boats to reach the rendezvous point began to cruise around in a wide circle waiting for other craft in the wave to fall into position. Once every boat in the wave was in the circle and in its proper place, a Navy control vessel issued the signal to make the landing run. Quickly the circle of craft faded into a wide line and swept toward the beach. A few yards offshore the coxswain gave the order, "Brace yourselves!" Seconds later the LCVPs grated to a stop, the ramp dropped, and troops were racing across the white sand.



*LCVPs rendezvous prior to the run for Kihei Beach on Maui*

In the best tradition of the jungle training centers, the amphibious centers also offered a de luxe postgraduate test. With Navy cooperation, it was planned to load an entire battalion landing team on LCVPs and LCMs, make a landing against an organized defense and then have the battalion move inland against other strongpoints. Company C, 108th Engineers, designed defensive installations on Maui for 136th Infantry landings while the rest of the engineer battalion prepared positions on Kauai.

Strongpoints confronting Colonel Draper's men were patterned after Japanese defenses on Betio Island in the Gilberts. Known as "Little Tarawa," it proved to be the roughest training problem attacked by 136th men in their World War II history.

"Little Tarawa" did not get unusually difficult until troop landings and inland reorganization had been effected. Once boat teams reverted back into platoons and companies and began to drive forward they discovered that their path of advance led up a steep ridge running perpendicular to the shore. The ridge was virtually covered with a layer of volcanic rock save for several grassy clearings which housed tre-





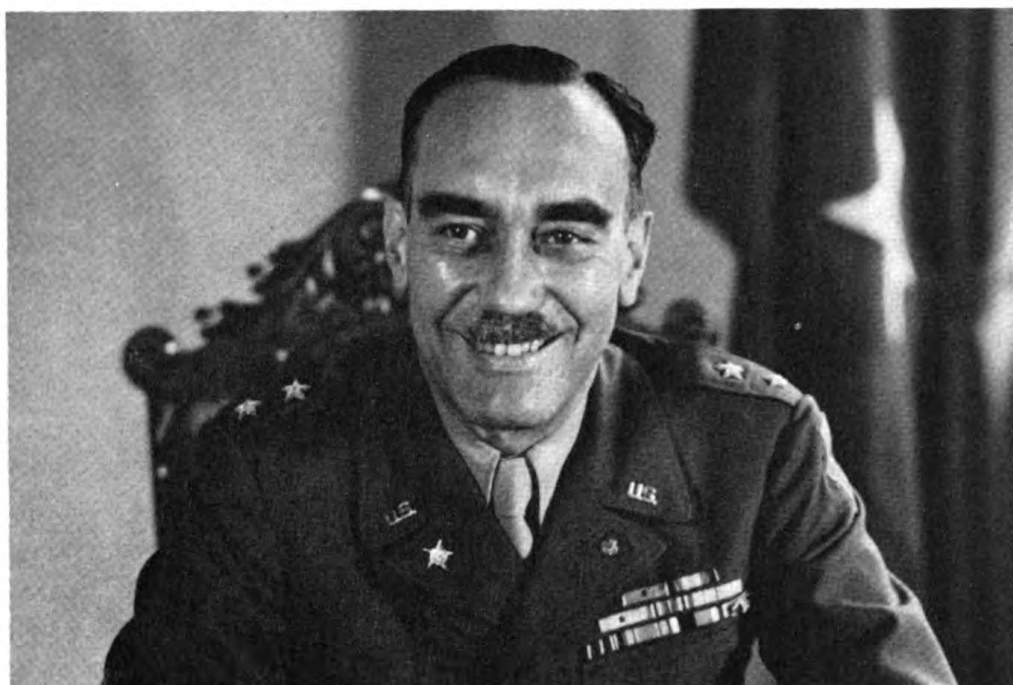
*Colonel Paul C. Serff, CO, 123d Infantry*

mendous concrete pillboxes. "Enemy" details were present all along the ridge top but pillboxes were unoccupied so that 136th troops could actually reduce them with flamethrowers and "live" demolitions charges. Although "Little Tarawa" was only a one-day exercise, it proved to be far more strength-sapping than the three-day jungle problem.

Here the emphasis was on speed. Infantrymen knew that as assault waves they had to push on rapidly so that other elements of the regiment could land and clear the beach. Leaders were required to analyze the situation quickly and keep their units pressing up the ridge. February's normally temperate climate had taken a turn to the humid side and medics were kept busy administering relief to heat-prostration cases. Umpires made each company sweat for its pillboxes. If an attack was expedited in a shabby fashion, umpires declared the units to be "held up by hostile fire" and the platoon had to employ the correct tactics before it was permitted to resume the advance.

Footing was insecure, and on volcanic rock a fall meant painful lacerations from the razor-sharp lava. Men saw a half-day's marching actually eat away the soles of their shoes. Doughboys forced to hit the ground due to "enemy" fire had their clothes shredded by the terrain. The excessive heat built up a thirst in the troops but no breaks were called for rest or replenishment of the water supply. Except for the volcanic rock, "Little Tarawa" was a harbinger of things to come





*Major General William H. Draper, Jr.*

when the 33d Division suffered through the heat and tortures of the Philippine campaign.

Amphibious training ended in early March and the Division returned to base camps and beach positions. Training continued, but now settled back into a less exhausting groove. Expert Infantryman tests were begun and each of the regiments took to the small-arms ranges and various combat courses. Doughboys took their required marches, went through the infiltration course at night and learned the technique of street fighting in engineer-built Jap villages. Every infantryman in the Division was familiarized with all infantry weapons. During this phase many afternoons were spent at outdoor theaters listening to 7th Division veterans discuss enemy conduct during the battle for Kwajalein.

A second major command change occurred in March. Colonel Draper, leader of the 136th Infantry since its activation in April 1942, was relieved from command of the regiment on 14 March by the War Department, and ordered to report to Washington where he was slated to head the Army's war-contract renegotiation branch. Several months after his return to the United States Colonel Draper was promoted to brigadier general. With the end of the war in Europe he went to Germany as economics chief of Military Government headquarters. In the summer of 1947 he was given his second star while on duty at Frankfurt. He left Military Government a few weeks later to become

Under Secretary of the Army. The regiment's executive officer, Lt. Col. Ray E. Cavenee, a fifty-year-old Regular, assumed command on 14 March 1944 and was promoted to colonel a month later.

General Richardson's headquarters, now designated Central Pacific Area Headquarters rather than the Hawaiian Department, alerted the Division for movement to the Southwest Pacific at the end of March. In characteristic fashion, General Clarkson made a quick trip to Australia, conferred with General MacArthur, visited the Division's destination in New Guinea and on his return personally carried the news of the alert to members of his command. Speaking to each battalion separately the Division Commander covered Kauai and then flew to Maui to talk to the 136th RCT. Troops gained confidence from the General's visit. They liked the sincere, confident way he discussed the hardships which lay ahead and the capabilities of the Golden Cross to overcome them. So contagious and unconcealed was General Clarkson's feeling of pride in the 33d that a new esprit swept over the Division in the wake of his talks.

Proper observation of security regulations prevented higher headquarters from disclosing the Division's destination to the rank and file of the Golden Cross, but everyone realized that New Guinea was the only logical choice. With the exception of Australia, it was the only area open to American forces. In the spring of 1944 New Guinea represented the outer fringe of General MacArthur's advances in the Southwest Pacific. Even as the Division prepared for its southward move, other infantry divisions in New Guinea were engaged in fierce fighting at Aitape, and final preparations were under way for the invasion of Biak. As for the date of departure, troops could only guess, but all hands knew that the alert presaged an early "Aloha Hawaii."

With the Division's departure to a combat theater imminent, General Clarkson was content to retain the same command and staff group which had achieved such brilliant results in Central Pacific advanced training. Lt. Cols. Frank S. Singer, Frank J. Sackton, William M. Haycock and John J. Dolan remained as G-1, -2, -3, and -4 respectively (Personnel, Intelligence, Plans and Training, and Supply).

Members of the special staff were Lt. Col. Joseph Martz, Adjutant General; Lt. Col. William T. Delihant, Finance Officer; Chaplain (Lt. Col.) William J. Rogers, Division Chaplain; Lt. Col. Jacob M. Arvey, Judge Advocate General; Lt. Col. Leslie R. Ireland, Ordnance Officer; Major Ralph Wagner, Signal Officer; Lt. Col. Fred A. Curl, Chemical Warfare Officer; Lt. Col. Timothy J. Mullen, Division Surgeon; Major Francis P. Kane, Division Engineer; Lt. Col. Ernest Bauman, Inspector

General; Lt. Col. Russell K. Kuhns, Division Quartermaster; Major Andrus B. Neill, Headquarters Commandant; Major Victor E. Warner, Provost Marshal; and Major Eli J. Paris, Special Services Officer.

Colonels Serff, Coulter and Cavenue continued in command of the three infantry regiments. Division Artillery was commanded by General Paxton with Col. Christiancy Pickett serving as artillery executive officer. The 122d Field Artillery Battalion, of the 123d RCT, was headed by Lt. Col. Roland P. Carlson. Lt. Col. William S. Everett led the 124th Field Artillery, assigned to support Colonel Coulter's 130th RCT. Fire support for the 136th RCT came from the 210th Field Artillery under Lt. Colonel MacDonald. In command of medium artillery was Lt. Col. George W. McClure of the 123d Field Artillery. The 108th Medical Battalion functioned under the leadership of Lt. Col. Durand Smith, while Major Kane led the 108th Engineer Combat Battalion.

Again the 130th RCT was the first element of the Division to make the change of station. On 21 April the Blackhawks, with troops of supporting arms and services, boarded inter-island steamers on Kauai and moved to Honolulu. There, personnel were transferred to the *Lurline*, a huge Army transport. Four days later the 123d RCT and part of Division Headquarters repeated the process, boarding the *Matsonia*. These vessels were famous luxury liners which had been converted to transport use. In prewar days they made the tourist runs from San Francisco to Australia. Men of the 136th RCT embarked on the *Monterey*, a sister ship of the *Matsonia*. The Hawaiian Islands phase for the Golden Cross officially reached an end on 30 April when the *Monterey* cast loose from its Honolulu moorings and headed "Down Under."

## Chapter 4: New Guinea

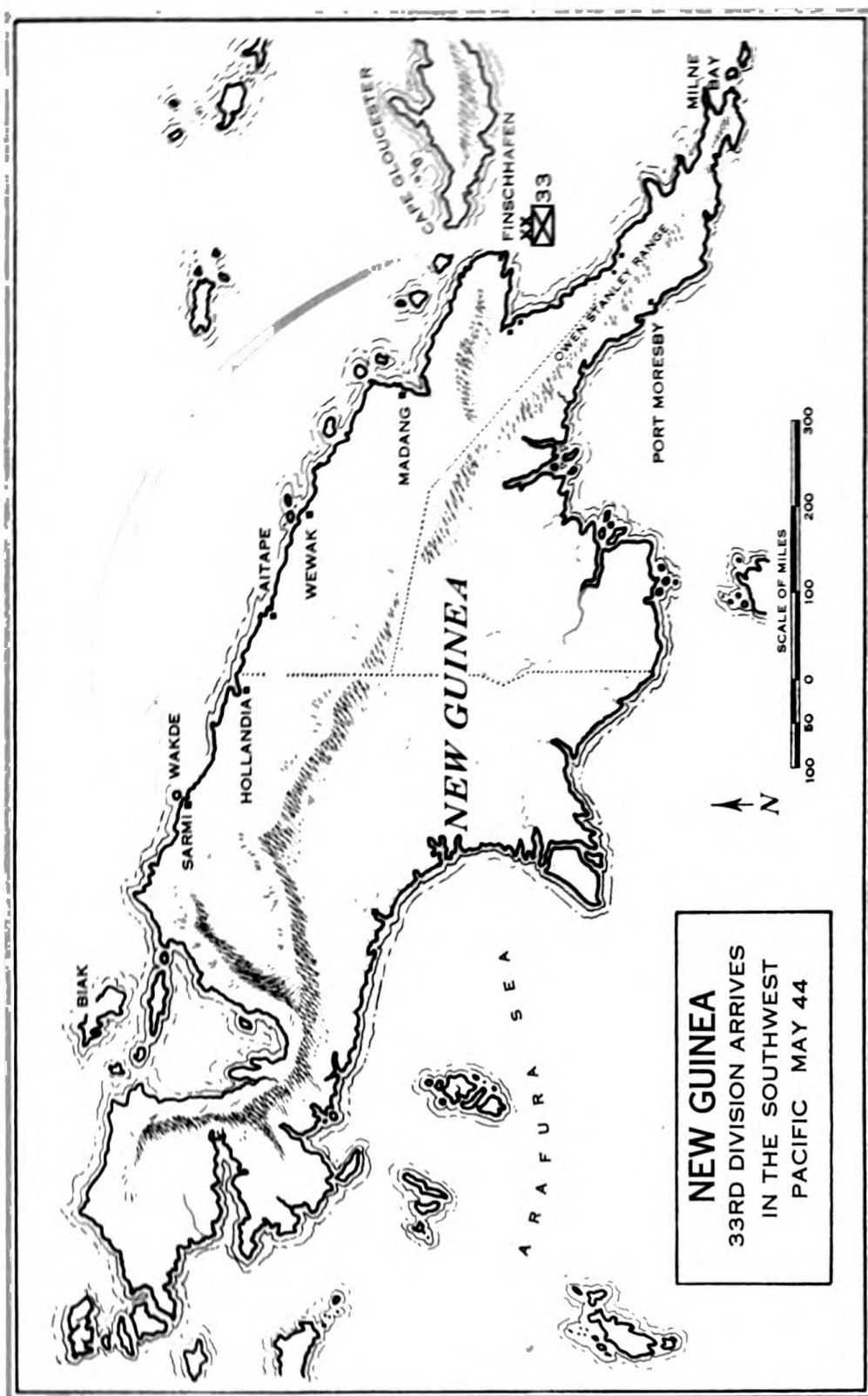
SAVE for the introduction to atabrine and the antics of Neptunus Rex, who refused to permit a global war to usurp his royal powers, the two-week voyage from Hawaii to New Guinea was without incident. The transports carrying the Division to the Southwest Pacific, large as they were, held too many troops to allow any appreciable degree of comfort. A blistering equatorial sun, added to overcrowded shipboard conditions, served to make the men more conscious of their humid surroundings. Some days, particularly those spent in the vicinity of the Equator, were so torrid as to be hardly bearable. Fortunately, the evenings were balmy and the majority of personnel deserted their stuffy compartments to sleep on the open decks during the run through the hot belt.

Finschhafen, situated on the tip of nose-shaped Huon Peninsula, was the terminus of the voyage for the 33d Division. A porthole view of their new surroundings was sufficient to convince the troops that the niceties of Western civilization were conspicuously absent from this huge tropical island. Finschhafen was not a city, town, village or hamlet. It was simply a name applied to a small native settlement and some Australian government offices reposing on a narrow strip of flatland between the waterfront and the jungles. All facilities, including those of the Army, were rude, temporary affairs. Dwellings consisted of pyramidal tents or thatched huts erected by New Guinea natives. The docks jutting out into Dreger Harbor, constructed of unpainted planks, were exposed to the ravages of the weather.

This unpretentious picture served as a stark reminder to members of the Golden Cross that they were embarking on a virgin phase in the Division's history.

Unloading was completed on 19 May. Now the 33d turned to its most important task of the moment: building a home for itself in this unbridled country until Sixth Army assigned it a combat mission. Semi-cleared areas lining Dreger Road, some fifteen miles from Base F at Finschhafen, were allocated the Division. Constant downpours and lack of engineering equipment hampered the Golden Cross in its construction efforts, but gradually stumps and vegetation were burned away, drainage ditches excavated and water points developed for bathing and laundering use.

Just the fact that the Division was in New Guinea in May 1944 seemed to strongly suggest that combat service could not be many months away. While General MacArthur's "war fought on a shoe-string" had passed through Finschhafen some time before, combat operations were in full swing farther up the New Guinea coast.



Map 3



*King Neptune greets a shellback-to-be*

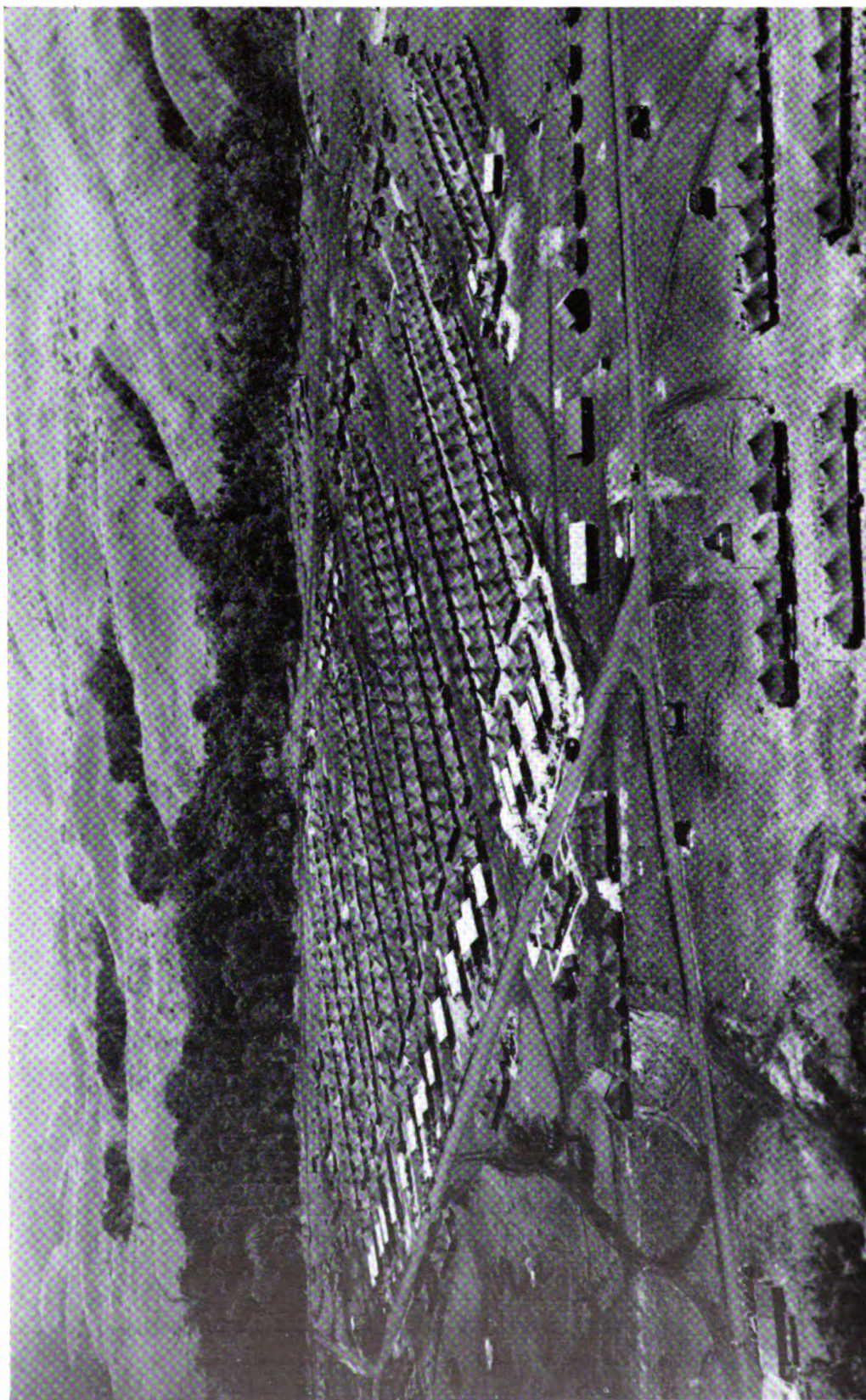
Quarterbacked by MacArthur and Lt. Gen. Walter Krueger, Sixth Army commander, American forces were leapfrogging from point to point along the northern shore: first Hollandia and Aitape on 22 April, followed by landings in the Maffin Bay-Wakde Island area less than a month later and finally, the 41st Division's invasion of Biak on 27 May.

General MacArthur's seven-league strides along the coast were not without remuneration. Biak was the climax of a drive which saw the enemy's New Guinea armies sliced into numerous segments, each piece contained in an individual, isolated pocket. American air and naval superiority precluded the chance of Nip reinforcement with troops from the East Indies or the Bismarck Archipelago. The Japanese, while strong in numbers, were fast becoming tactically impotent. Soon they would have to choose between capitulation or starvation.

## II

Rain was the first enemy encountered by the 33d Division on New Guinea. It turned company streets and training areas into calf-deep bogs of mud, necessitating constant maintenance of drainage facilities.





*Division Artillery camp at Fortification Point*

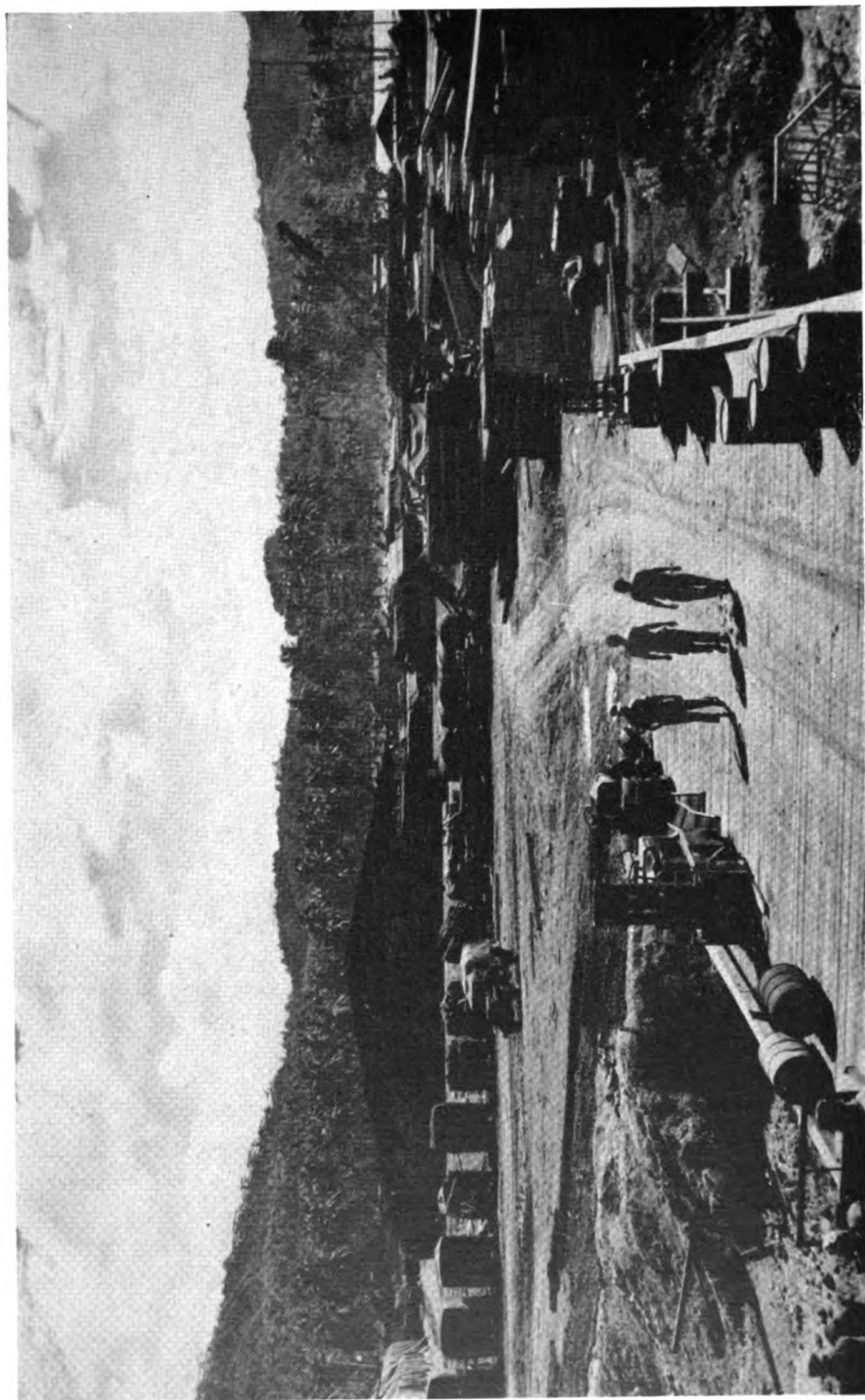
Clothes and blankets quickly mildewed if stored too long between airings. Small arms required frequent attention; a short period of neglect meant the beginnings of rust and corrosion. Division engineers suffered more because of the downpours than any single unit. Charged with maintaining Dreger Road, engineer companies were forced to spend their days wading through mud in an effort to keep traffic moving.

As time went on, however, New Guinea rains became accepted as a matter of course. Daily routine progressed without interruption because of them, leaving the "rainy day" schedule a strictly Stateside innovation; the "clear day" schedule was the unusual. Division entry into the shooting war appeared imminent at this point. To offset the hindrance of weather much had to be done to keep the Division at a peak of combat efficiency. Training in basic subjects began at the end of May. In order to give artillery units more suitable areas in which to conduct firing exercises, all Division Artillery, under General Paxton, was dispatched to a new campsite at Fortification Point, forty miles up the coast from Finschhafen. Here, the terrain was comparatively open, allowing the artillery wider latitude in conducting training exercises.

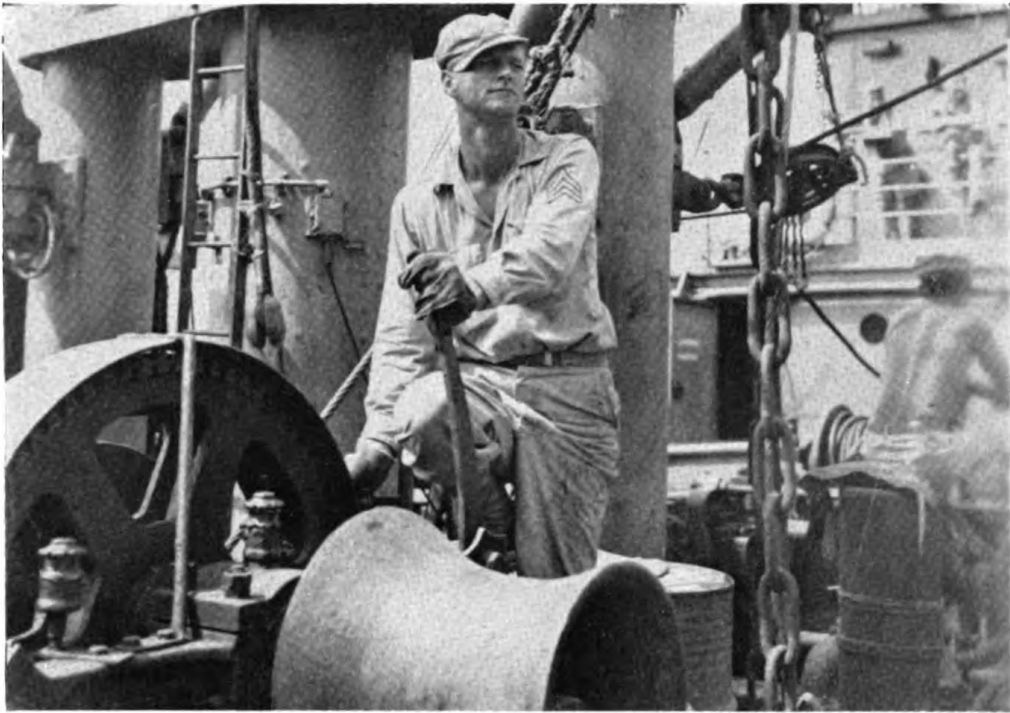
Advanced amphibious training was the first major training operation assigned the Golden Cross. Much work had been accomplished along this line in the Hawaiian Islands, but there training had been restricted to shore-to-shore work. Now the 33d was scheduled to cover all of the amphibious phases: shore parties and other beach duties, loading of many types of craft and the execution of large-scale ship-to-shore landings by battalion landing teams. While Division troops were engaged in reviewing fundamentals, a sizeable group of officers and noncoms representative of all divisional units attended the Amphibious Staff and Command School at Milne Bay. General Myers, in direct command of the Division's amphibious training program, headed school personnel.

During the month of June the 33d was launched into the most distasteful assignment in its World War II history. Base F, organized at Finschhafen to receive and break down Stateside supplies for forward operational units, was hopelessly behind in its vital work. This impairment, caused by a severe shortage of port personnel, resulted in Dreger Harbor being crowded with scores of ocean-going vessels impatiently waiting to be unloaded. Theater policy gave base operations a high priority. It also empowered the base commander to employ all troops in his area, combat or service, if they were needed to accomplish





The Dregger docks

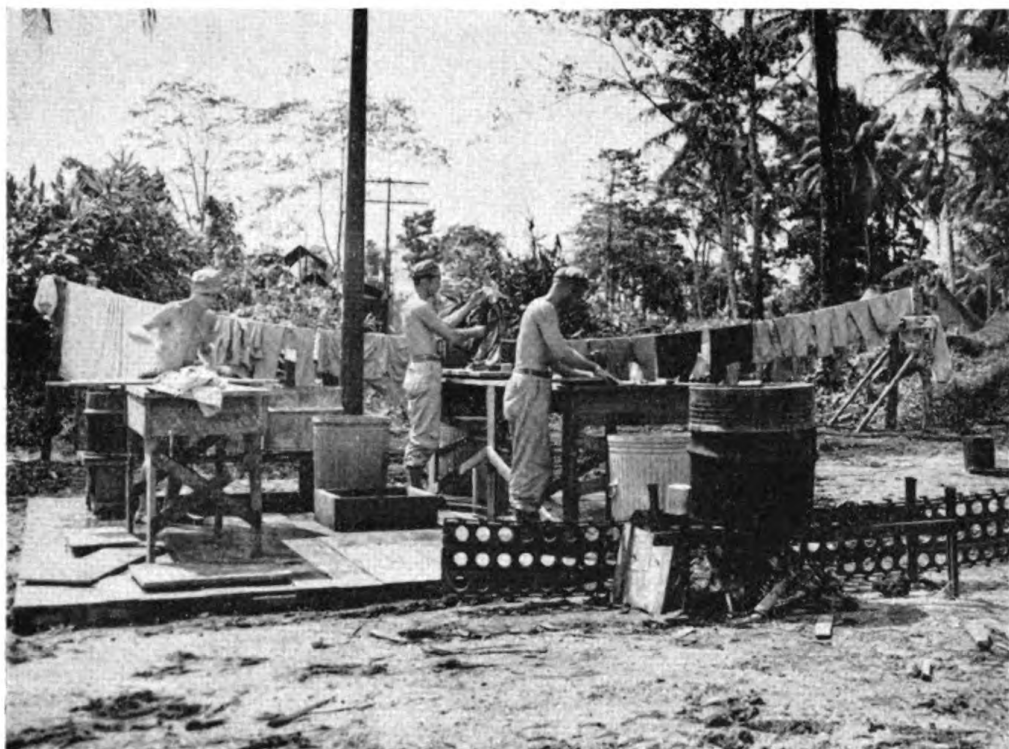


*An infantry squad leader turns winch operator*

this mission. Accordingly, General Clarkson was asked to supply several thousand men for an indefinite period to augment Base F's slim port forces.

This development not only caused a complete revision of previously accepted training schedules but threw living conditions at Finschhafen into a state of turmoil. New plans produced by the Division staff called for rotation of all troops on training and dock assignments. One RCT was to man the docks while the others implemented the training schedule. Port work became a 24-hours-a-day proposition for the units drawing this duty. It soon became commonplace to see some companies rise for "reveille" at 1300 and other groups bed down for the "night" at 0600.

From a physical standpoint, unloading boats was rugged work. In addition to the actual labor, details had to cope with the inconveniences of the climate. Daytime shifts worked against a broiling sun but were able to gain considerable rest during the cool nights. Crews on late at night worked under more comfortable conditions but had to get their sleep in the mid-day heat. Dog watches got a little of both. Although members of the 33d had no previous experience in this type of work, they quickly became proficient at it. Details were broken down into three sections: a hold crew to place the cargo on wooden pallets; a deck crew which manned the winches raising sup-



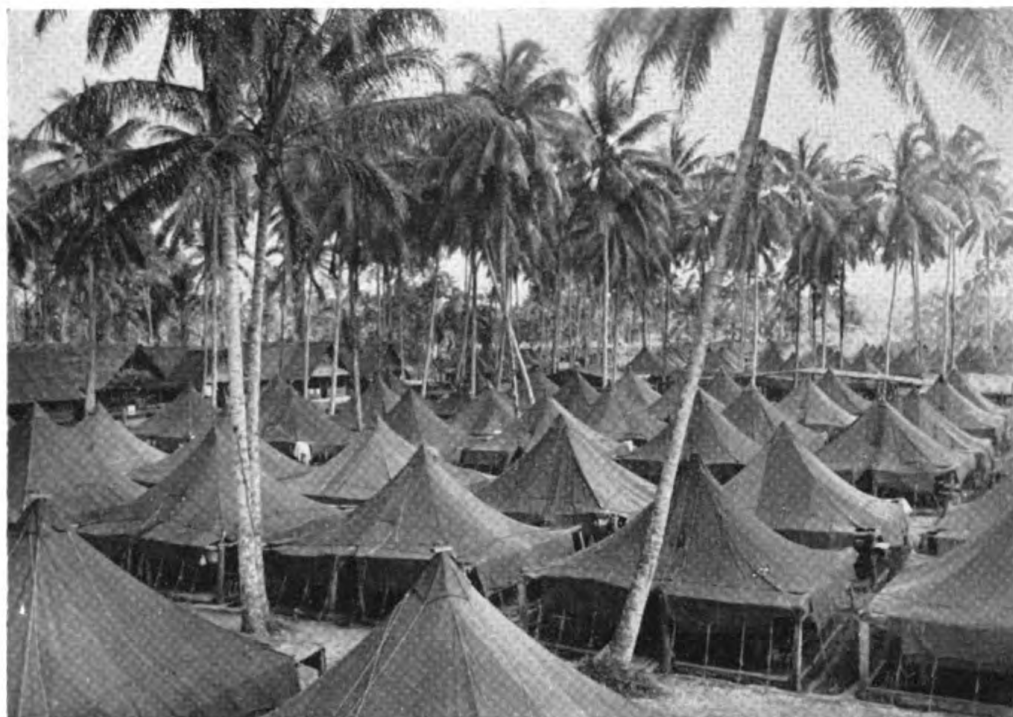
*Almost every day was washday at Finschhafen*

plies from the hold; and a dock crew assigned to load cargo on quarter-master trucks drawn up alongside the ship.

Numerous material gains, which could not otherwise have accrued, came from work on the docks. Frozen fowl occasionally replaced bully beef as the principal Division nutrient. Generators miraculously turned up and almost every company had electric lighting. Coca-Cola, as rare in New Guinea as a haberdashery, occasionally found its way into company menus.

In the thirty-three days from 26 June to 29 July the Division received everything promised it in the way of amphibious training. Facilities made available to the 33d were virtually unlimited. Three massive Australian APAs (attack transports), HMAS *Kanimbla*, *Manoora* and *Westralia*, each capable of carrying a battalion landing team, were committed to the Division during the training period. A flotilla of LCIs (landing craft, infantry), LSTs (landing ship, tank), and LCTs (landing craft, tank) supplemented the Aussie vessels. An instruction team was attached to the Division from SWPA headquarters to act in an advisory capacity.

Elements of the 123d RCT, operating by battalions, were the first to undergo New Guinea amphibious exercises. In order for a battalion to gain the maximum benefit out of the program it became necessary



*It didn't take long for a handsome tent camp to materialize at Finschhafen*

to augment it with an outside company to handle shore-party duties. In this way the battalion would be able to concern itself solely with landing techniques. First phases of training consisted of instruction in waterproofing vehicles and howitzers, proper methods of boarding and debarking from landing craft and a short refresher course on the cargo nets.

When dry-land instructions were terminated the battalions took to the water. Assault units were borne to landing beaches by LCIs while artillery pieces and trucks followed via LSTs. Practice landings were initially made on a beach near Finschhafen which formerly served as a camp for Sixth Army headquarters. The final stage of this phase was a wet run from Finschhafen to Fortification Point where assault units went ashore tactically and began a two-day ground problem. Shore parties actually unloaded LSTs and LCTs and established supply dumps which serviced the attacking troops.

Battalions next entered the APA phase. Small craft took the troops out to the transports, anchored several hundred yards offshore, for a three-day period aboard ship. Here the men learned how to raise and lower crew-served weapons, radios, wire reels and other unwieldy equipment from the APAs' decks to the LCVPs bobbing alongside. Countless hours were spent climbing up and down rope ladders leading from the mother ship to the landing craft. Rainy weather and





*Volleyball was a favorite on New Guinea*

rough seas occasionally made this work hazardous but personnel were required to carry on regardless of the elements. Shipboard accommodations were comfortable enough and the change from Division fare to Australian rations was welcomed.

Training was considered completed when the APAs weighed anchors and set sail for Fortification Point. Three miles off the Point, the men boarded LCVPs and went into the beach in waves. The usual tactical problem followed the landing. This one was of three days' duration, requiring negotiation of stifling *kunai* grass and stagnant swamps until the battalion's objective was secured. Umpires were on hand for this exercise and battalions were scored in accordance with their ability. A novel twist was accorded with the introduction of night raiders as part of the "enemy" detail. These groups succeeded in keeping assault units awake most of the night through the combined usage of sirens, catcalls, taunts, blanks and firecrackers. Upon completion of this exercise the battalion returned to Finschhafen for a tour on the docks, freeing another force for amphibious training.

Only one unfortunate incident marred the conduct of the amphibious course for the 33d. On the night of 20 July the *Kanimbla*, loaded with 130th RCT troops, slipped anchor a few hours past sundown and ran aground on a reef close to the Division headquarters beach. No one was injured although damage to the vessel required a trip into



*A typical tent interior at Finschhafen*

drydock the following day. Ironically, the ship beached within two hundred yards of the Division theater where Jack Benny, Carole Landis, Larry Adler and Martha Tilton were staging a show for the remainder of the Golden Cross. Hearing raucous laughter from the direction of the beach, men aboard the transport rushed from their compartments to the rail. However, the *Kanimbla* chose to drift aground directly behind the large stage. Her passengers could neither see nor hear the performance; they could just listen to the galling roars of appreciation.

New training doctrines were propounded once all elements of the 33d completed the amphibious cycle. Between tricks on the docks infantrymen resumed their Expert Infantryman tests, first started in the Hawaiian Islands several months before. Muddy terrain and typical New Guinea weather rendered requirements for the badge doubly difficult. Nevertheless the regiments were not permitted to deviate from them. Division's one concession was to allow troops to begin the mandatory 9- and 25-mile speed marches in the cool of early morning. All other physical fitness tests, combat courses, infiltration course, and compass marches were taken in the heat of day.



*Doughboys stride down the Dreger Road on a training march*



*Jack Benny and songstress Martha Tilton put on a show for the Golden Cross*

Camp development matched strides with training during the first few months at Finschhafen. By mid-August the Division base bore little resemblance to the areas first occupied in May. Outdoor theaters and baseball fields had been graded and beautified by engineers and infantry fatigue details. Tents were pulled over supporting beams, giving the camp a more symmetrical appearance. Every man was required to construct a shelf running the length of his cot fastened to either end of his mosquito frame. Clothes and personal equipment were stacked on this shelf as though for a garrison inspection. This constant airing added to the life of clothing and web equipment.

Food got better as the stay at Finschhafen grew longer. Fresh meat, still rare, was no longer a novelty. Although shipments to the Division had been quadrupled, bully beef was in no danger of losing its place on the menu.

Special Services activities blossomed considerably between May and August. USO troupes which formerly played only for the Air Corps at Finschhafen now made the 33d Division a regular port of call. Softball leagues were revived. Each infantry regiment and Division





*Life at Finschhafen took a turn for better with the arrival of Wacs*

Artillery reorganized their dance bands. WACs were newly arrived in New Guinea and Special Services organized dances and socials with the Base F complement. At this stage sufficient planned entertainment was available for off-duty personnel so that they had more to look forward to than endless evenings of letterwriting.

Health of the command kept pace with all other local improvements. Malaria had never been much of a problem because of a carefully supervised atabrine program. Now jaundice and jungle rot—once fairly prevalent throughout the Golden Cross—were well under control. As the men became accustomed to the climate tropical afflictions of all types decreased in number.

While everything else was on the upswing, however, morale dropped steadily. Even though their dock duties were discharged in good humor, personnel found it difficult to understand why a combat division was forced to function as a group of port battalions. They felt that the winch and pallet were supplanting the M-1 and bayonet. Had Finschhafen been Hawaii or Fort Lewis the blow would not have been so hard to take. But this was New Guinea, everyone was screaming about a shortage of troops, action was in full swing a few hundred miles away yet an entire division was being subtracted from the operational picture. Why?

General Clarkson personally undertook to supply the answer. As in Hawaii when morale was low he toured the base, speaking to the men in battalion groups. He praised them for their performance of duty at Dreger Harbor; he lauded them for the commendable manner in which they, combat troops, had undergone the humiliation of working as ordinary laborers. Too, he reminded them that they were making a far greater contribution to the war effort unloading ships than they would as a training division. In closing, the Division Commander reassured his men that the 33d's day would come—but soon,

### III

And soon it was. Not for all of the Golden Cross but for a healthy one-third of it. A short time after the Division was transferred from Sixth to Eighth Army control in mid-August, General Eichelberger tapped it for a special task force. The force was to be of regimental combat team size. It was to go in at Maffin Bay, roughly six hundred miles westward from Finschhafen, on 1 September. Current occupant of the sector, the 31st Division, was being pulled out for an invasion of Morotai. Selection of the combat team was left to the discretion of the Division Commander. He arbitrarily chose the 123d.

Most members of the combat team had heard of the Wakde Island-Maffin Bay zone. Just a few months before it was the scene of some of the bloodiest fighting in the New Guinea campaign. Maffin Bay became an active front on 17 May when Tornado Task Force—composed of 41st Division elements and the 158th RCT—made an amphibious assault and quickly secured a broad beachhead. Three days later part of this force backtracked to Wakde, a small island twelve miles offshore. After a bitterly contested landing American troops were finally able to secure a foothold on the tiny coral isle. More heated action occurred before this segment of Tornado swept across the island, killing several hundred Japanese and seizing vital Wakde Airdrome.

With that, higher headquarters pulled out the 41st and 158th RCT, substituting parts of the 6th Division as Tornado Task Force. Moving in on 6 June, the 6th suffered many casualties in its efforts to broaden and deepen the beachhead. The majority of these stemmed from the battle for Lone Tree Hill, a terrain feature which later served as an outpost for the 123d RCT. Shortly after Lone Tree Hill was taken, the 6th was alerted to move on Sansapor, 375 miles to the west. Next to assume the duties of Tornado Task Force was the 31st Division which relieved the 6th on 12 July. Its activity was restricted to con-





*Pillboxes on the Toem flank of the Maffin Bay perimeter*

stant patrolling and consolidation of the giant perimeter that circumscribed American gains in the sector.

As with the 6th, the 31st's Maffin Bay tour of duty came to an end when it was ordered to assault Morotai, in the Netherlands East Indies, on 15 September. Now the 123d RCT was to fill the Dixie Division's place as Tornado Task Force. General Myers, Assistant Division Commander, was placed in command of the combat team. Moving via LCIs and LSTs the 123d left Finschhafen on 25 August and reached Maffin Bay on 1 September.

Mission of the combat team was to insure operation of Wakde Air-drome and to maintain its security; to defend the perimeter and provide security for supply, dump and water areas used by ships loading and unloading troops and cargo at the Maffin Bay port; to aggressively patrol areas outside the perimeter to the extent necessary to prevent a surprise counterattack by the enemy; and to furnish labor details and equipment to expedite the loading of the departing division.

Even though the tactical situation was fairly static by this time, the 123d faced a critical problem as soon as it accepted responsibility for the area. One regiment of infantry had the near-impossible task of garrisoning a perimeter formerly held by a full division. Arrival of the 2d Battalion, 136th Infantry, at Maffin Bay on 4 September did not materially resolve this problem. General Myers was forced to abandon the broad defensive line held by the 31st Division and pull his installations much closer to the shoreline. East and west boundaries suffered corresponding reductions. The combat team's first days at Maffin Bay were spent in destroying vacated positions and constructing new pillboxes.

Once the re-aligned perimeter was completed, troops moved into semipermanent areas. One battalion was assigned the Lone Tree Hill-Rocky Point sector which anchored the right flank of the perimeter.

A second battalion held the ground directly inland from the bay while another battalion was responsible for the Toem area, left flank of Tornado Task Force. The remaining battalion worked on the docks and was designated as reserve. A system of rotation was employed whereby all units took a turn at dock duty in addition to serving on all three "fronts."

At the time the 123d landed at Maffin Bay there were an estimated two thousand Japanese in the sector with 1,400 of them believed to be combat troops. Most of these were assembled about thirteen miles west of the perimeter at Sarmi Point. Enemy commanders kept harassing groups of varying size posted between their Sarmi forces and the 123d RCT. A Nip company was known to be dug in around the deserted Sawar Drome, five miles from the right side of the semi-circular perimeter. Other outposts were deployed in depth between the Woske River—scarcely a mile from 123d pillboxes—and Sawar Drome. Smaller Jap groups operated in front of the perimeter in the Mount Aftawadona area where they attempted to keep open an escape route for defeated Hollandia remnants.

Outgoing infantrymen of the 31st Division gave combat team members precise locations where they were likely to run into trouble. "... Stick on your own side of the Woske and you're as safe as though you were in your mother's arms. Cross the river and you'll really see some lead fly." However, it was inadvisable for the regiment to simply sit back and concentrate on holding the perimeter. A purely passive defensive attitude on the 123d's part would serve to alert the Japanese of Tornado Task Force's numerical weakness. It would invite attack. Therefore, active patrolling was instituted as soon as perimeter defenses were perfected.

Baker Company of the 123d and a detachment from the Reconnaissance Troop platoon attached to the combat team were the first Golden Cross units to see action at Maffin Bay. Company B was given the mission of patrolling the Sawar Drome area while the Troopers were to probe enemy defenses around Mount Aftawadona. Both groups had five days in which to complete their respective assignments. They left on the morning of 11 September. Each was augmented by forward observer parties from the 122d Field Artillery Battalion; native scouts who had worked with the 6th and 31st Division; and as many litter and rations carriers as they desired.

Neither force experienced difficulty during the first day of their respective patrols. Baker Company came under sporadic sniper fire shortly after crossing the Woske River but was able to dispel these

harassing riflemen without suffering casualties. Reconnaissance Troopers met no opposition as they moved along the side of the river held by the task force, toward Mount Aftawadona. At 1000 the following morning, however, the cavalymen bumped into a Japanese strong-point. A few minutes after the patrol left its bivouac area at 0900 a native scout, travelling with the point, noticed fresh split-toed tracks going in the same direction as the patrol. He quickly called for the patrol leader, Lt. Lowell V. Doke, and showed him the enemy footprints.

Doke passed this information on to his men and then ordered the column to resume its march. At 0950 the native scout in the lead suddenly turned around and ran to the rear of the column. No amount of coaxing could persuade him to move forward. Realizing that the enemy was probably dead ahead, Doke motioned his men to leave the trail and conceal themselves. Then, with Lt. Dean B. Spencer, he began to crawl along the side of the trail. To the right of the trail and some twenty yards away was a small shrub-covered hill. Neither Doke nor Spencer could detect any sign of life on it. They concentrated on following the footprints originally picked up by their guide.

Lieutenant Spencer was first to notice that these tracks broke off the trail and led to the rear of the hill. Just as he began to motion to Doke, a Nip machine gun opened up on the two of them from point-blank range. Doke was hit twice in the first burst but managed to roll into the heavy vegetation lining the trail. Spencer, miraculously unhurt, dove for cover and got the remainder of the patrol to move forward. Now Americans and Japanese both settled down into a waiting game. After forty-five minutes, two Japs, dug in on the side of the hill, rose for a quick glimpse of the situation. Tommy-gun fire killed them both.

At this time, the platoon rear guard told Spencer that they could see a group of enemy on the opposite bank of the Woske preparing to reinforce the machine gun on the hill. Slowed down because it was necessary to move Doke by litter, Spencer decided to pull back. Instructions given him at Maffin Bay specified that the Troopers were not to enter a fire fight but simply patrol the route to Aftawadona. Rounding up the carriers presented a problem but finally the column evacuated the danger area. Spencer sent a pigeon message to headquarters describing the situation. A 122d Field Artillery liaison plane dropped a return message ordering the patrol back to Maffin Bay.

Company B's experience was similar to that of the Reconnaissance Troop patrol. Charged with probing the area from the Woske west to Sawar Creek, the company met but a few stragglers during its first



*Staff Sergeant Winfield R. Green receives the Silver Star from General Clarkson*

two days away from the Maffin Bay perimeter. However, on 13 September it was ambushed by enemy machine gunners just as it reached the barren bank of Sawar Creek. The lead platoon, commanded by Lt. Walter B. Roper, Jr., a replacement officer who had joined the Division at Finschhafen, received the brunt of this cleverly executed fire. Roper was the target for the first burst. He was instantly killed, the first 33d Division man to lose his life in World War II.

Overwhelmed by this surprise fire, members of his platoon were forced to move back and seek cover in the dense vegetation growing twenty yards from the creek. The enemy raked the company for a few minutes and then trained their pieces on Lieutenant Roper's body, obviously defying Baker to attempt a rescue. Light mortars were set up behind the company line but observers were unable to pinpoint Japanese positions. While the mortar shells were dropping on the far side of Sawar Creek, S/Sgt. Winfield R. Green, a Weapons Platoon section leader, bolted out of the thick grass and ran toward the lieutenant's body. Nip gunners sighted him immediately and engaged him, but despite the bullets that snapped into the dirt around him Green reached the dead officer, gathered him in his arms, and sprinted back into the undergrowth. With that, the company broke contact and returned to Maffin Bay, its mission completed.

Sergeant Green, later tendered a field commission in the Philippines, was awarded the Silver Star for his courageous act. He was first in the Golden Cross to be decorated for gallantry in action.

#### IV

Patrolling continued unabated throughout the 123d's stay in Dutch New Guinea. Most were of security nature; one- and two-day missions far out to the front of the perimeter. However, each company in the combat team went out on a five-day mission and invariably organized groups of enemy were encountered. Although the fighting did not approximate Luzon action in intensity, it was equally difficult in many respects. Maffin Bay was more humid than Finschhafen. Terrain there was mostly swampland, making every patrol a gruelling one from a physical standpoint. However, patrol operations brought the regiment to a battle-wise state, readying it for future operations where "attack" and not "patrol" would be the watchword.

Occasionally companies on reconnaissance found themselves forced into engagements where they had to commit all troops and supporting weapons against enemy units. These fights were marked by the same hand-to-hand fighting and night harassments that characterized later regimental operations. Perhaps the most hectic one involved Company C, commanded by Capt. Martin L. Marchant, Jr. This company fought the enemy for three days of its five-day patrol.

Charley Company had been ordered to reconnoiter Sawar Drome to determine enemy dispositions around the field. Bolstered by attachments from Company D, regimental medical and communications personnel, a forward observer party from the 122d, and sixty-five native carriers, the 250-man force left Maffin Bay on the morning of 28 September. A fleet of DUKWs transported the company from the main perimeter to a beach on the far side of the Woske River. Marchant's men debarked, assembled on the beach road which paralleled the shoreline 150 yards inland, and struck out for Sawar Drome. By 1600 Company C was but a short distance from the objective. Marchant moved his troops off the road and set up a perimeter intended to serve as the company's base of operations.

No activity transpired during the hours of darkness, but "routine patrol" ideas were rudely dispelled at dawn when the Japanese threw a 48-round artillery barrage at the perimeter. Evidently the company's position had been revealed the previous night when several of the carriers built small fires on the beach for cooking purposes. Although no casualties resulted from the heavy shelling, rounds detonated within



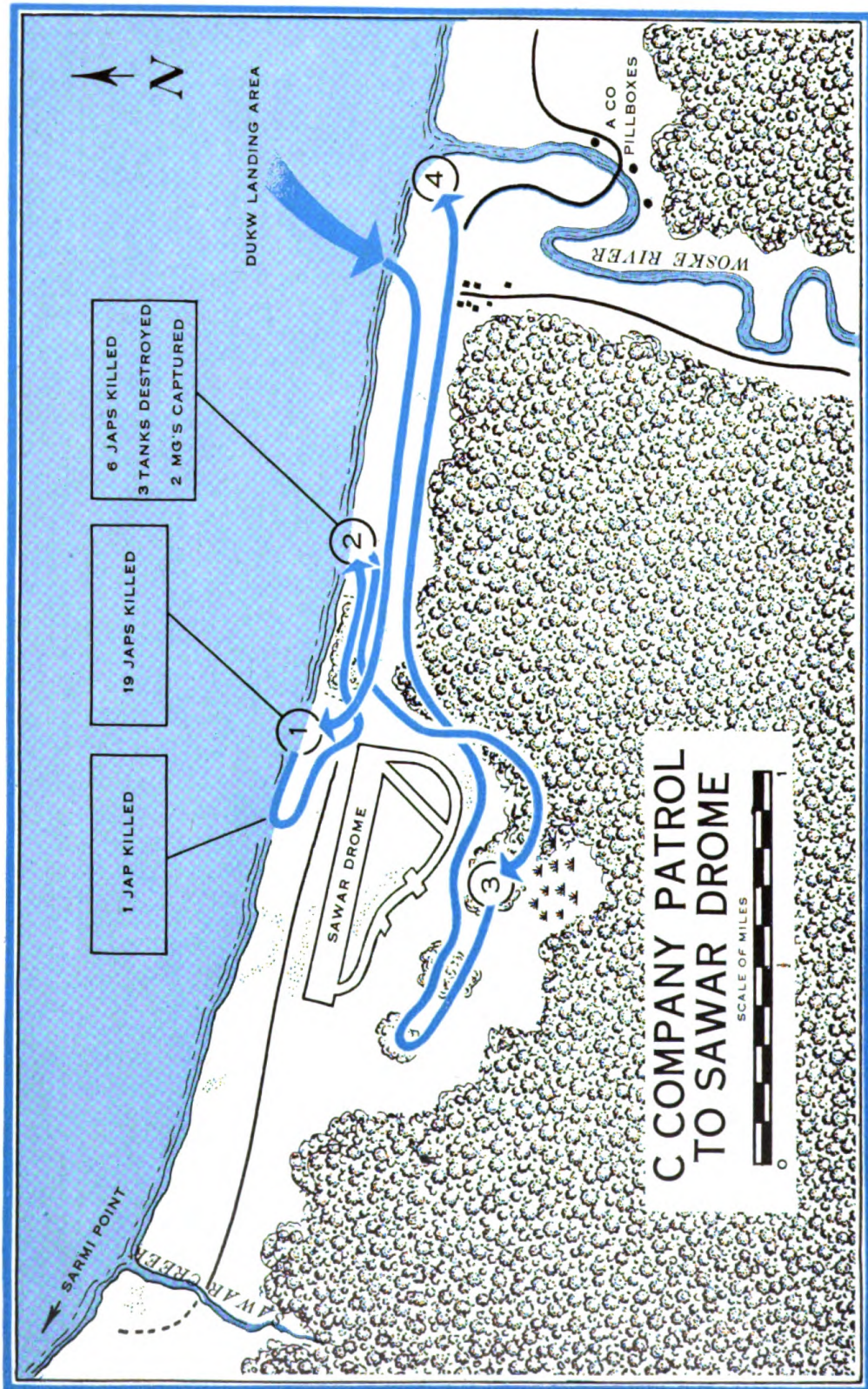
ten yards of Lt. Hartwell K. Blake's 3d Platoon. Lts. Paul Giudice and Keith Settrington, forward observers, radioed for a liaison plane when the Nips first ranged in on their position. Its appearance brought about a rapid cessation of fires.

Two platoons were dispatched on patrol right after breakfast to find the best route to the western side of Sawar Drome. Lt. John F. Reardon's 1st Platoon operated south of the field while the 3d Platoon patrolled a trail on the northern fringe. Reardon—later killed in a Luzon plane crash—ran into immediate difficulty. One of his men, Pfc. Melvin Larsen, detonated a 100-pound aerial bomb which had been rigged as a land mine by the Japanese. Larsen was killed, Pvt. August Pufahl seriously wounded, while everyone in the platoon was badly shaken up. After reporting his casualties to Marchant, Reardon was ordered to return to the company CP. On the trip back an enemy ambush party fired on the platoon but heavy rifle fire killed one and put the remainder to flight. Casualties were evacuated to Maffin Bay via an LVT (landing vehicle, tracked) sent out by task force headquarters.

While the 1st and 3d Platoons were out on patrol Captain Marchant moved his company perimeter to a new location eight hundred yards eastward. Carriers were permitted—and encouraged—to cook their suppers at the old position. Six hours after the company turned in for the night the Japanese repeated their morning barrage. This time, however, Company C listened with enjoyment as the Nip rounds thundered into the vacated area.

All elements of Charley Company pulled stakes the next morning and started on the second leg of the patrol. No enemy was met throughout the day but the swampy ground south of the drome made progress slow and difficult. Wading through hip-deep water under the blistering sun fatigued most of the men and no one was sorry when Marchant signalled a halt at 1600. The perimeter for the third night was located in a semi-cleared grove less than a mile from the first night's resting place. Here, the company became engaged in its first after-dark fight.

Jap harassing parties located the perimeter about an hour before midnight. They made no immediate effort to attack but instead walked around the installation several times conversing with each other all the while. On the stroke of midnight, however, two enemy patrols consolidated forces and assaulted the company position. A few stayed in the rear to provide covering fire while the majority tried to crawl into the Charley perimeter. Marchant's men answered the invasion with well directed grenades and an unceasing barrage from the 60mm



Map 4  
(Figures indicate overnight perimeters)

mortar section. Additional enemy now came up manning two Nambu light machine guns. Withering fire swept Company C. Machine-gun bullets smashed Marchant's SCR-300 and shredded many of the ponchos which had been put up as rain shelters.

Mortarmen, under Lt. Gregory A. McNally, increased their fires while riflemen on the edge of the perimeter aimed at the muzzle flashes of the Japanese pieces. Pfc. Ed Ledward's BAR silenced one Nambu while mortar fire forced the other to withdraw. Artillery fires were brought around the perimeter a moment later and dropped intermittently throughout the night. Five enemy bodies were found a few yards from the installation at dawn. Charley Company did not suffer any casualties in the course of the fight.

At 0800 on the fourth day Company C resumed its reconnaissance. Another half-mile was covered without incident, bringing the force to within sight of its objective. By this time food supplies and water were beginning to dwindle so Captain Marchant decided to forego further patrolling and begin the trek back to Maffin Bay. As a preliminary to the move, Marchant established contact with a liaison plane requesting information on enemy activities between the company and the Woske. In reply he was advised that three Nip light tanks and an undetermined number of infantrymen had just been observed searching the ground occupied by Charley Company three nights before. Minutes later the pilot radioed Marchant notifying him that artillery fire had knocked out two of the tanks.

Riflemen of the 2d Platoon, under Lt. John B. Lord, formed the advance guard for the march home with Sgt. Howard Johnson's squad out in front as the point. Now familiar with the terrain, the company was able to make good time through the swamps and jungle on the southern edge of Sawar Drome. Upon reaching the beach road, Johnson spotted a single Nip running from the old perimeter to the road. A glance to the other side of the road disclosed a few of the enemy trying to conceal themselves in the tall grass adjacent to the road. Johnson, who was later killed in the Luzon campaign, silently deployed his squad and called for Lieutenant Lord.

His report convinced Lord that an ambush was directly ahead. Company C's mortars were promptly sent forward and set up to fire at minimum range. Lieutenants Giudice and Setterington made contact with artillery gun positions and asked that battery fires be given upon their signal. When mortars and artillery reported that they were ready to fire, Marchant gave them the order to open up. This sudden bombardment, landing squarely upon the enemy without warning, threw

them into panic. Many ran from their places of concealment onto the exposed roadway where infantry fires quickly mowed them down. Combined infantry-artillery fires accounted for nineteen Japanese dead.

Still, Charley Company could not account for the one remaining tank observed earlier in the afternoon. A short time later, however, the artillery plane again called Marchant with the news that the tank had been located. Looking up from the FO's radio, the company commander could see the pilot dive his plane at the beach and then describe small circles around an area on the waterfront, which was only a few yards from the old perimeter. Captain Marchant detailed Blake's 3d Platoon to close in on the enemy frontally while he took a small group around on the left flank.

While Marchant was carrying out the envelopment, the 3d Platoon came under fire from three machine guns dug in around the lone tank. Blake built up a firing line and for several moments an intense fire fight ensued. Meanwhile Captain Marchant and a handful of men had reached a small, shrub-covered knob to the right of the Nips. Pfc. Glenn Weimer covered the closest enemy machine gun with BAR fire, causing it to suspend operation. Marchant, on top of the knob, was handed a rocket launcher by Sgt. William Fell. He fired three rounds at the hastily entrenched tank, scoring direct hits with two of them.

The two remaining enemy Nambus were knocked out promptly. Sgt. Elijah York, leading a mortar squad in support of Marchant's effort, dropped three rounds on one emplacement, practically obliterating its occupants. A rifle grenade fired by T/Sgt. Frank Rauch got the other gun. Rauch later lost his life in the Philippines. Darkness was now minutes away so Marchant thought it advisable to postpone a search of the area until the following day. He reorganized his company on the road and moved it to the mouth of the Woske where another perimeter was established.

Marchant, Blake and twenty volunteers returned to the scene of the fight on the morning of the fifth day. They hoped to find the tank still mobile so that it could be loaded aboard an LCM and brought back to Maffin Bay as a war trophy. However, one of Marchant's rockets had disabled the ignition system and it was impossible to get the tank in motion. Lieutenant Blake destroyed it with incendiary grenades. Although reconnaissance of the beach disclosed no enemy bodies, signs existed that at least six Nip met their deaths defending the tank. Torn, bloody clothing and bits of flesh were strewn around the tank and the machine-gun positions.

At noon Charley Company troops loaded on DUKWs for the trip



back to the Maffin Bay perimeter. Their five days of reconnaissance had resulted in the deaths of twenty-six Japanese.

Patrols operating west of the Woske during the next few weeks met increasing enemy resistance. These reconnaissance parties did not have to penetrate as far as Sawar Drome before coming under enemy fire. Since Charley Company's successful patrol Jap commanders at Sarmi had apparently decreed an extension of the airfield's defenses. Organized groups of Japanese thoroughly covered the area from the drome to the west bank of the Woske. Occasionally they carried automatic weapons to the river bank and fired into three Company A pill-boxes which outposted the western side of the task force perimeter.

Headquarters desired to capture an enemy prisoner, if possible, and determine exactly how many men the Nips had transferred from Sarmi to the Woske River sector. This mission fell to the 33d Division Scout Team, a hand-picked unit organized for assignments such as this. Composed of men from every regiment in the Golden Cross, the Scout Team had been trained under the famous Alamo Scouts, Sixth Army's private infiltration force. It had been active since the 123d took over the Maffin Bay perimeter, penetrating enemy lines at points beyond the reach of the rifle companies. Lt. John L. Durant, formerly a platoon leader in the 123d Infantry, commanded the team. Second in command was Lt. Francis E. Peebles of the 136th Infantry.

Given a free hand in planning the mission, Durant felt that an ambush placed across the Woske represented the best chance of taking one of the enemy alive. To reinforce the Scout Team on this delicate assignment, Colonel Serff attached to it one platoon of riflemen from Company F, led by Lt. Raymond R. Utke. Durant's scheme called for his Scout Team, composed of eight men besides Peebles and himself, to actually lay the ambush. Utke's platoon was designated as a supporting force, assigned to cover the crossing of the Woske and the setting of the trap. Orientation of troops began on 18 October as soon as Durant's plan had received regimental approval. Execution of the plan was scheduled for the morning of the 20th.

Moving stealthily, the 31-man patrol managed to ford the Woske at its mouth without alerting enemy sentries. At 0500, an hour after the river crossing, the ambush was in place. Durant had selected a spot about three hundred yards west of the Woske and some seventy-five yards in from the shoreline. He deployed his team in bunkers and high grass which lined both sides of a narrow beach trail. Utke's men stayed a few yards closer to the Woske, prepared to reinforce the ambush party upon Durant's signal. For five solid hours ambush party





*Lieutenants Francis E. Peebles, John L. Durant and Raymond R. Utke prepare to leave on their ill-fated patrol*

and support maintained a tense watch, waiting for a Nip patrol to walk into the jaws of the trap.

When no Japanese appeared by 1000, Durant, disgusted with the turn of events, decided to advance toward Sawar Drome and set another ambush along a more travelled route. Utke and five Fox Company men moved out as the point, followed by Lieutenant Durant and the Scout Team and the remainder of the infantry platoon. Barely two hundred yards were covered before an enemy party, following Durant's move along the beach, quickly organized an ambush of its own and enfiladed the American column with machine-gun fire. Several knee mortars opened up simultaneously with the automatic weapons.

Durant's men were caught flatfooted. Zeroed in on the open beach, all they could do was hit the ground and attempt to roll away from the machine guns' beaten zones. Lieutenant Peebles, bringing up the rear with fifteen F Company men, managed to withdraw his force and turn some answering fire against the enemy. This diversion enabled



*The Massewang River served as a maneuver area for troops based at Finschhafen*

forward elements to break contact and race for the Woske. Five dead were left behind, including Lieutenant Durant who had been killed by a mortar fragment. Utke and Peebles both suffered wounds as did nine other members of the ill-fated force.

Offensive activity slackened somewhat after this abortive effort. It did not flare up until 11 December when King Company crossed the Woske. Once more fierce resistance greeted the intruders. Although Company K accomplished its reconnaissance mission it did so at the cost of two men killed and ten wounded.

King Company's patrol was the last five-day mission run by the 123d Infantry. All infantry units had now been out on extended patrols and had accumulated much knowledge of jungle operations and of their tricky enemy. Patrolling settled down into the "routine" category—close-in security patrols—until 25 January 1945 when elements of the 93d Division relieved the combat team. However, the 123d's experience, slight as it was when compared to other Tornado Task Forces, did not come gratuitously. From 12 September, when Lieutenant Doke of the Reconnaissance Troop became the first casualty, until 4 January, when the last battle casualty was sustained, the regiment had 10 men killed and 55 wounded.

But the 123d had something to show for this bloodshed. Its members now had an esprit that could have never been engendered in garrison. Its commanders had gained confidence and experience from the numerous skirmishes with the enemy. It had learned that infantry without artillery is impotent and that a combat team was only as strong as its weakest link. It considered itself ready for bigger things.



*Colonel Carleton Coulter, Jr., Blackhawk commander*

#### IV

With the absence of the 123d RCT from Finschhafen, dock details swamped the remainder of the 33d. Larger crews were requisitioned from the artillery units stationed at Fortification Point to offset the loss of General Myers' force. Training activities were seriously impaired but nevertheless the Division managed to implement a program calling for a review of basic jungle warfare techniques. Most work was carried on in regimental training areas although occasional platoon problems were conducted at Fortification Point. The curriculum centered on "old reliables" of jungle combat: use of flamethrowers, squad problems, hand-to-hand fighting and reduction of enemy pill-boxes.

An unfortunate accident occurred during this period which caused the 130th Infantry to lose the services of its commander. On 19 September Colonel Coulter was seriously wounded as he demonstrated pill-box reduction methods to one of his squads. While on a routine inspection tour of training areas that morning the colonel stopped to

observe a fire team knock out a mock installation. He saw a base of fire form and pound the coconut-log supports of the box with heavy BAR and M-1 fire while a grenadier crawled toward the embrasure from the left flank. The grenadier moved in too cautiously and flung his grenade from a too great a distance.

Colonel Coulter halted the exercise without delay. Taking the grenade from the apprehensive doughboy the regimental commander requested the riflemen to again open up. While fire ripped into the pillbox the 49-year-old West Pointer rushed in from the side. Just as he rose to throw the grenade a ricocheting M-1 bullet tore into his right shoulder. Colonel Coulter was rushed to the 237th Station Hospital at Base F. Surgeons there found that the bullet had touched a nerve causing a partial paralysis of the colonel's arm.

Hopeful that the Maryland career soldier would stage a rapid recovery, General Clarkson appointed Lt. Col. Arthur S. Collins, Jr., 1st Battalion commander, to take temporary command of the Blackhawks. A month later, when it became apparent that Colonel Coulter was too badly hurt to rejoin the regiment, young Lieutenant Colonel Collins assumed permanent command. From his hospital bed Colonel Coulter wrote a message to the regiment which was inspiring in its humility. It read:

HEADQUARTERS, 130th INFANTRY  
A. P. O. 33

26 October 1944

MEMORANDUM

TO: The Officers and Men of the 130th Infantry

Today, after over two years association with you, I have been relieved from assignment to this regiment.

I have never sought promotion or decoration, neither of which I have felt I deserved. My proudest title and the one in which I gloried was "Colonel, 130th Infantry."

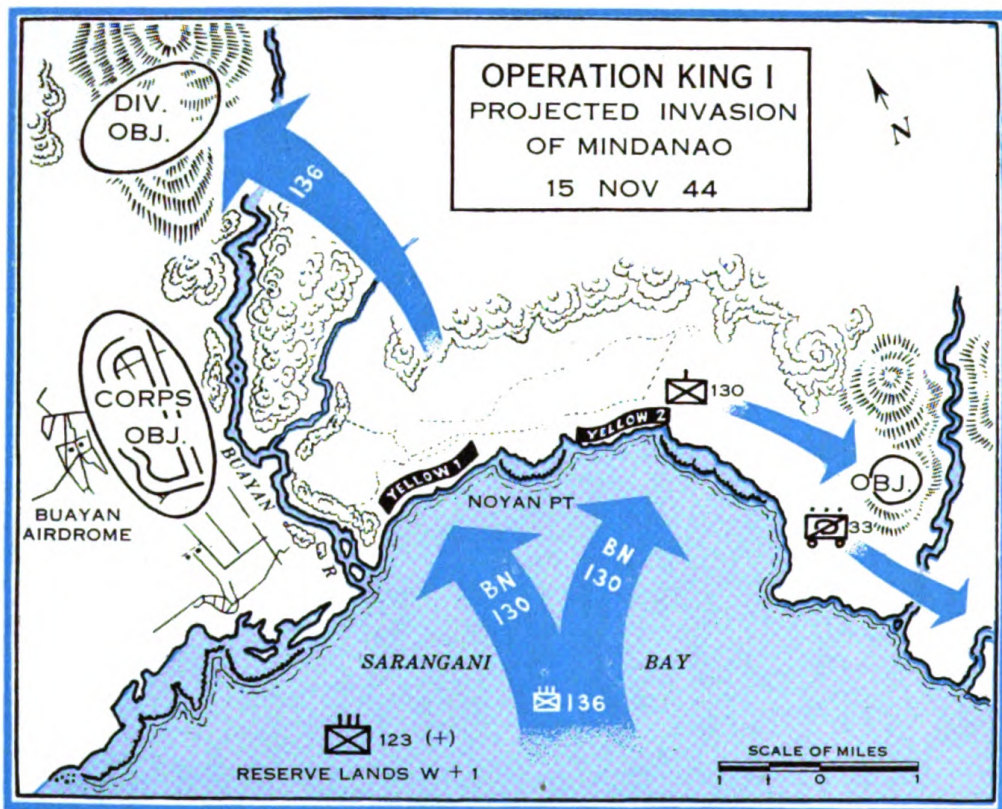
To have led you in combat would have been the culmination of forty-two years of longing and thirty-one years of preparation. For some reason God has denied me this, my greatest wish. His will be done.

My one solace in my unhappiness is the fact that I recognize in your new commander an officer of far greater ability than I. All that I have lost is small in comparison to what the regiment has gained. I feel that my removal was the means of creating the vacancy for him to fill. You should face the future with greater confidence now that he has taken his rightful place.

To one and all I wish God's blessing and a safe and speedy return.

CARLETON COULTER, Jr.  
Colonel, 130th Infantry





Map 5

Major Ernest D. Jessup replaced Lt. Colonel Collins as commander of the 1st Battalion. Collins, now a regimental commander at the tender age of twenty-nine, was reputedly the youngest man to command a force of this size in the Asiatic-Pacific Theater of Operations. A 1938 graduate of the Military Academy, the dynamic Bostonian had joined the 130th in April 1942 as a captain. "The Ripper," as he was known in radio code, fast became a worthy successor to Colonel Coulter.

October 1944 saw the Pacific war split wide open. Subsequent disclosures brought out that the 33d Division hopes for early operational commitment were split along with it. Leyte was invaded on the 21st by the Sixth Army as the first step in the re-conquest of the Philippine Islands. General MacArthur had originally planned to invade via Mindanao but spectacular air and naval successes brought about a change of plans. Chief deterrent to an assault of the Leyte-Samar area had been the profusion of enemy power known to be housed in this sector. However, Third Fleet carrier strikes and Fifth Air Force forays reduced this core of strength in a ridiculously short period. When asked his views on Admiral Halsey's recommendation that Mindanao be abandoned and an invasion of Leyte substituted immediately, MacArthur promptly agreed.



Plans for the Mindanao operation, known as King I, had called for the 33d Division to spearhead the move back to the Philippines as part of I Corps. Target date had been set for 15 November 1944. Planning for the operation had begun in August at I Corps headquarters at Hollandia. Lt. Col. William M. Haycock, Division G-3, and Lt. Col. Leslie R. Ireland, G-4, had been attached to Corps at that time to handle operations and liaison details for the 33d. Because of the top secret classification given the operation, Golden Cross troops were blissfully unaware of the momentous undertakings progressing around them.

Loading schedules specified that the 123d RCT would embark at Toem while the rest of the Division staged at Hollandia. A rendezvous at sea was to consolidate the two forces.

At Sarangani Bay, on the southern coast of Mindanao, the invasion fleet was to land elements of the 33d and 43d Divisions. Had the operation come off, the 130th Infantry would have gone in at H-hour with two battalions abreast on the right of the 43d. Its assigned mission was to secure the beachhead. At H plus 20 the 136th Infantry was scheduled to land behind a wave of tanks, pass through the 130th in column of battalions, and seize the Division's initial objective: a mountain six miles north of Sarangani Bay. The 123d RCT was designated Corps reserve, slated to come in on D plus 1.

Small solace was derived from the thought that much of the matériel and supplies unloaded by the Division went into Leyte behind the assault waves. Most men in the Golden Cross began to feel that the Division was World War II's forgotten unit. They began to call themselves the "4F" Division—the Finschhafen Freight Forwarding Force. A few months before, things hadn't taken on this appearance. Finschhafen was a name that still smacked of the jungle wars; fighting was transpiring at Hollandia, Aitape, Maffin Bay and Biak. The men could feel a kinship with the doughboys operating in these sectors. But Leyte! Now the war was two thousand miles away. From a strategic standpoint the Southwest Pacific campaign was finished.

Another six weeks went by before the Finschhafen Freight Forwarding Force ceased operations. On 4 December orders arrived at the Division CP directing the Golden Cross, less the 123d RCT, to break camp at Finschhafen and move on short notice to Morotai. Mission: reinforce the garrison on the island. Classification of the move: administrative.

## Chapter 5: Morotai: Jungle War

LITTLE happiness greeted the news that Morotai, a small island of the Moluccas group 1,500 miles northwest of Finschhafen, represented the next stop in the 33d Division's travels. Dough-boy, redleg, engineer and medic experienced similar thoughts in regard to the alert notice: Morotai was not a whit better than New Guinea. General MacArthur's road to Tokyo had passed through the jungle-covered rock on 15 September 1944 when the 31st Division moved in without opposition. Morotai was a vital jumpoff point, true, but wasn't the tactical end confined wholly to guarding Thirteenth Air Force installations?

Mournfully, members of the Division prepared for the long voyage. A fleet of LSTs was to carry both troops and impedimenta to the Moluccas. One could sense the attitude of the men as they boarded the squat vessels: what will it be this time, training or dock details? After seventeen months away from the United States their baptism of fire seemed no closer than it was in the California desert.

But GI prognosticators badly missed the boat with their predictions of "dock detail," "perimeter," "training" and "dry run." Could they have been with their division commander at the time of embarkation they would have started the voyage with mingled feelings of excitement and apprehension instead of disdain.

General Clarkson, with a small party of staff members, had flown to Morotai as soon as he received the movement orders. His purpose was to confer with XI Corps and 31st Division representatives to coordinate reinforcement plans. Maj. Gen. Charles P. Hall, Corps commander, greeted the Golden Cross leader with information that the 33d's mission had been radically altered. Reinforcement of the perimeter was out. Japs had been streaming onto the island from Halmahera. The 33d was to clean them out.

Captured enemy documents interpreted by Corps G-2 indicated that the Japanese planned to sweep out of the jungle and wrest the Gila Peninsula from American possession. Navy torpedo boats, maintaining around-the-clock patrols, had smashed numerous infiltration attempts from Halmahera, but nevertheless enough landing barges had broken through so that the entire Japanese 211th Infantry Regiment was grouped on the island. G-2 pinpointed this force on Hill 40, an overgrown terrain feature hidden in the tropical morass of vegetation that was Morotai. Hill 40 was to be the Division's objective.

It is not difficult to understand Jap strategy in planning the recapture of Morotai. At this time it was MacArthur's principal Pacific airbase.



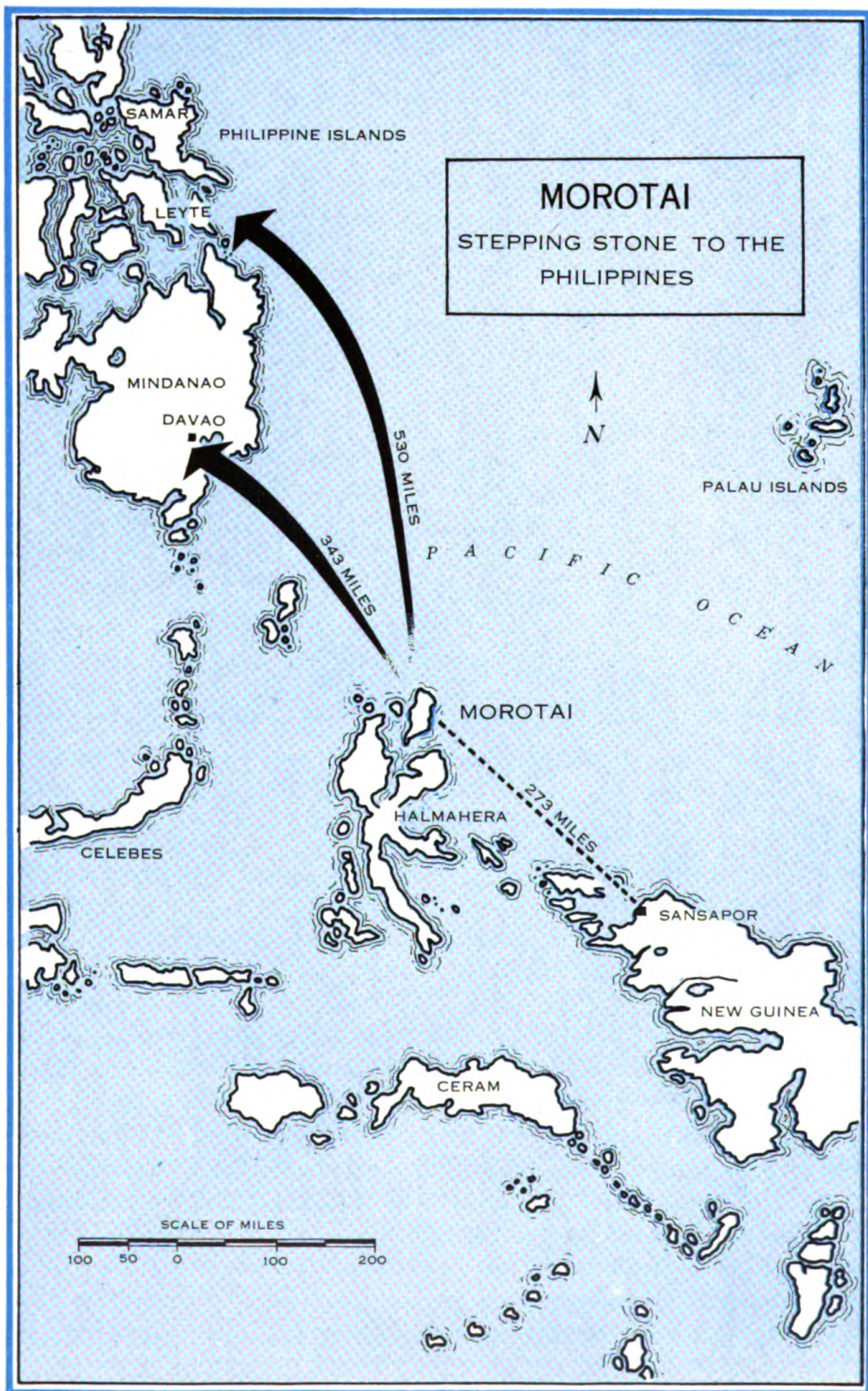
*The dominoes galloped twenty-four hours a day during the voyage from New Guinea to Morotai*

Fighters and bombers based here had been able to support the Philippine operation and at the same time engage installations in the neighboring East Indies islands. Should Japanese daring and fanaticism pay off with the seizure of the Gila Peninsula, the results would have a far-reaching effect upon the Pacific war effort.

On 21 December Division troops streamed ashore on the humid peninsula. Everyone noticed a difference in temperature immediately. If Finschhafen was hot, Morotai manufactured the rods that stoked the fires of hell. A brilliant sun, bounding off the landing beaches, blinded the men with its intensity. Unloading progressed smoothly and the Division quickly evacuated the beaches for inland assembly areas. There, personnel attacked the same type of stump-dotted wilderness that had greeted them when they arrived at Finschhafen seven months before.

Camp construction had barely begun when Division sprung the news of its combat mission. Briefing and reconnaissance began at once. Troop orientation was carried on in small groups, never larger than one platoon. Word of the operation was accepted calmly by the infantry





Map 6



*LSTs disgorge their cargoes on the beach at Morotai*

elements. There had been no big build-up to preface the attack; no weeks of dry runs or admonitions that "this is it." Preparations for action progressed in a matter-of-fact manner.

Before moving out in the attack the Golden Cross was subjected to something foreign to it in the realm of warfare—air raids. Jap bombers based at Halmahera and Borneo made frequent forays over the small isle. Christmas Eve particularly was a big night for the Nips. Their bombers, sneaking in over American radar, dropped several sticks of bombs directly on the bomber strip, destroying many Thirteenth Air Force Liberators. Night fighters flying patrol over the peninsula engaged two of the Japanese planes and sent both down in flames. A few 33d Division men in bivouac near the bomber strip were wounded by American anti-aircraft shell fragments, thereby becoming the Division's first Morotai casualties.

Christmas dinner could have been served in more pretentious surroundings but nevertheless Lt. Colonel Kuhns and the 108th Quartermaster Company got the Yuletide victuals up to the combat units. Some men, scheduled to enter the line on Christmas morning had their holiday meal on the night of the 24th while others ate turkey for breakfast on the 25th.

A rifleman from Able Company, 136th Infantry, unwittingly made an unforgettable picture of the doughboy on the eve of combat. As soon as he had mounted the truck which was to carry him to the line





Colonels Ray E. Cavenee, CO, 136th Infantry, and Frank J. Sackton, Division Headquarters

of departure this man clasped his M-1 between his knees, unbuttoned the pocket of his fatigue blouse and extracted a huge turkey drumstick. As the truck clashed gears and started down the rude road the infantryman serenely settled back into his seat and began to munch on the turkey leg. Eddies of dust gradually obscured him from sight as he left to fight.

The *Infantry Journal* recounted in graphic detail a story of the Second Battle for Morotai. Appearing in the July 1945 issue, under the title "Hill 40," the article was written by Lieutenant Colonel Sackton, Division G-2. It was the first detailed account of the operation to find its way into public print. It follows:

After securing New Guinea, the Southwest Pacific forces turned to the Philippines. But first it was necessary to secure the west flank and

seize bases that would permit staging our aircraft forward. Maps indicated that if we held an airstrip on the Moluccas Islands in the Netherlands East Indies both problems would be solved. Therefore, on September 15, 1944, U. S. forces streamed ashore on Morotai on the northern tip of the Moluccas and only four hundred miles from the Philippines. The enemy was surprised; his strength—a thousand men—was quickly dispersed. Immediately airstrips were built to accommodate the air force that began smashing at the Philippines early in October. A strong perimeter defense of the new base was adequate protection against the small disorganized groups remaining on Morotai. But the enemy, impatient with his state of affairs, reacted. On October 12 he put an infantry colonel ashore on Morotai for the purpose of organizing the remaining Jap strength there. Also, by a series of nightly shore-to-shore movements from Halmahera, he reinforced Morotai in preparation for the Jap counterattack. Running the gantlet of Navy PT boats cost him heavily, but he took his losses and by December 1944 had placed on Morotai the bulk of his 211th Infantry Regiment.

The Jap colonel assembled his strength in the area of Hill 40 where it constituted a serious threat to our air and naval installations. He began with reconnaissance and harassing activity against our perimeter, and kept up these tactics until December 14 when it became apparent that he was capable of an attack in force, and was actually planning such a move against our airstrips. To remove this threat it was necessary to seek out the enemy in his lair and destroy him. Our garrison forces were tied down to perimeter defense and so elements of the 33d Infantry Division were brought in from New Guinea. The 136th Infantry was selected to do the job.

There were serious obstacles from the start. The regiment would have to cut itself off from the coastal bases, and operate independently. Every ounce of supply would have to be hand-carried over tortuous jungle trails under heavy guard, or dropped from the air. Few native carriers were available. Finally, the enemy had to be fixed and engaged in his mountain fastness. A more arduous task could not have been assigned an infantry regiment.

The regimental commander ordered the march on the enemy in two columns. The regiment less the 3d Battalion moved to Pilowo, while the 3d Battalion staged at Radja. Supporting artillery moved to Ngelengele Island. The inland movement started on December 26.

The jungle trails were more difficult than we had expected. Heavy equipment carried by packboard exhausted the carriers and required the transfer of loads every fifteen minutes. The loads of heavy mortars,



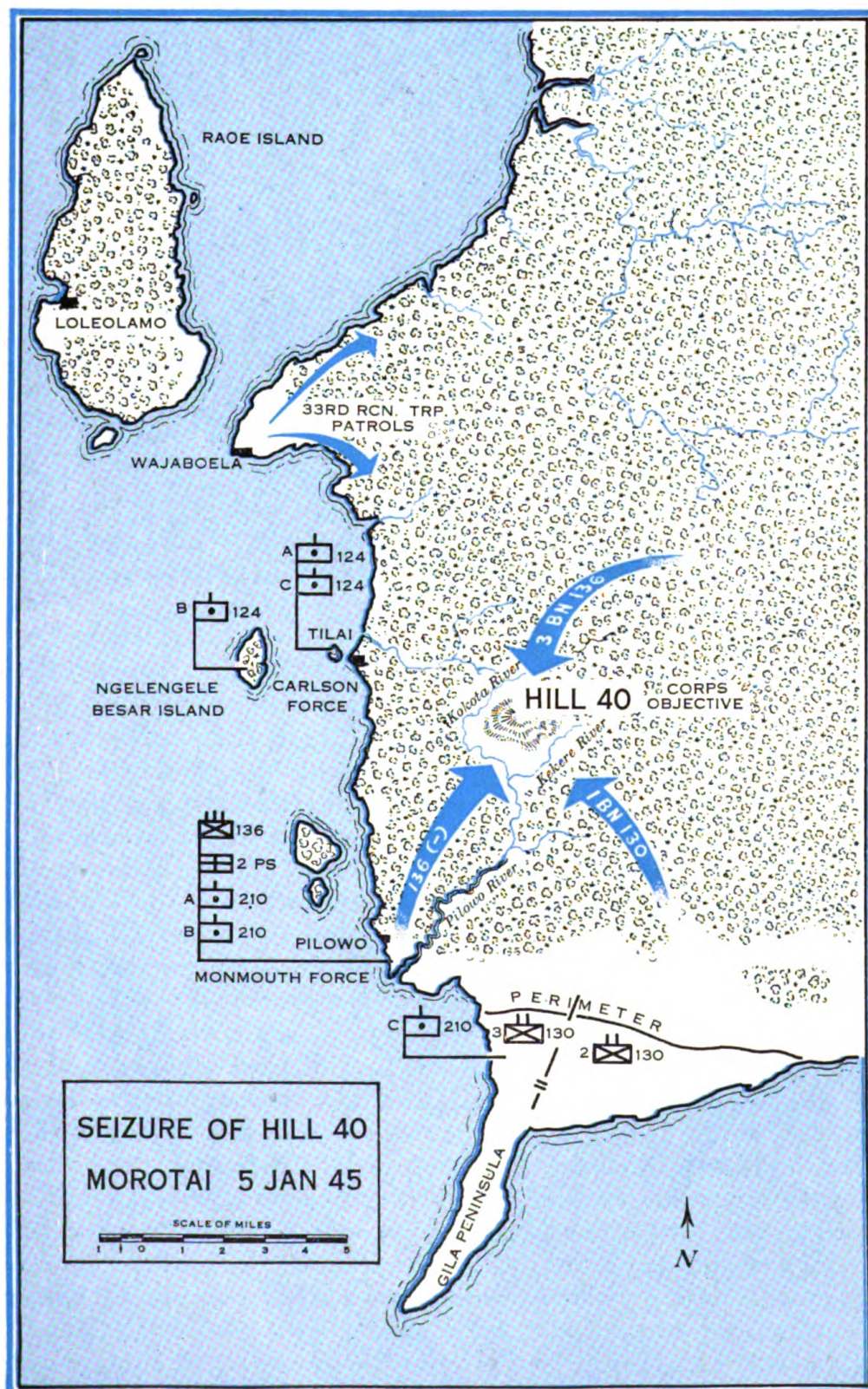
*Jap emplacement near Hill 40*

machine guns, and ammunition were moved with agonizing difficulty and slowness. A mile inland the radio (SCR-284) blanked out, cutting communications between the columns. An artillery liaison plane with an SCR-300 took up the job of inter-column communications by flying from one column to another, talking to the troops while overhead. The artillery forward observers with their SCR-610s fared no better and relied on a liaison plane for contact with the fire direction center on Ngelengele.

The Pilowo column did not meet the enemy until December 30, when a reconnaissance patrol operating to the left (north) flank encountered a small group of Japs in the vicinity of the Pilowo River, south of Hill 40. Reconnaissance was then emphasized on the left flank where it was pushed north of the Pilowo River on January 1. Entrenched Japs were discovered, and a search for flanks revealed the all-around defense of the nose southwest of Hill 40. (The Jap defenses east of the nose were not immediately discovered.) The 1st Battalion, Major Lewis L. Hawk commanding, had already swung to the north, and was ordered to attack the enemy. Early on January 2 the 1st Battalion reconnoitered the position prior to the attack and discovered that the position reached far to the east of the nose.

The regimental commander, with the 1st Battalion, realizing that a strongly fortified enemy confronted him, decided on a coordinated





Map 7



*Casualties at the 2d Battalion aid station await evacuation*

attack for the morning of January 3. For this purpose he moved the 2d Battalion, commanded by Lieutenant Colonel Arthur T. Sauser, to the west of the enemy position for the enveloping movement while the 1st Battalion was ordered to attack from the south. A preparatory artillery concentration from Ngelengele provided accurate support prior to the attack. At H-hour (1000) the battalions attacked simultaneously. Two hundred yards from the enemy positions, where the day before the reconnaissance patrols had roamed at will, the attackers came under fire of tree snipers. To add to the problem, some Japs withheld fire from their camouflaged roots until our troops were nearly under them. Then they would drop short-fuzed demolition charges (TNT).

Although the attack gained ground our forces did suffer casualties and were delayed. Squads inched their way forward, spraying the trees as they advanced. When sniper fire became intense we tried to by-pass it. This meant moving off the trails through the stifling jungle where visibility was twenty feet at best, every foot of it hard going and control almost impossible. But the doughboy held his own and advanced.

The 1st Battalion, attacking upward to high ground under murderous small-arms fire, was stopped eighty yards short of the enemy positions. At this distance the enemy entrenchments could not be seen, but the broad front of enemy fire and the sound of his automatic weapons gave some idea of his position. As the 1st Battalion evacuated its wounded, the 2d Battalion to the west was in a desperate fire fight. Its



attack had started eastward toward the enemy flank but the impassability of the jungle and the force of enemy sniper fire had veered the attack southward. Thus it overran the two enemy positions on the nose and wiped these out. Late afternoon found the battalion on the west flank of the 1st Battalion. It turned to face the north, and then dug in for the night.

The regimental commander thought over the many problems that confronted him. There was supply, especially. His regiment had used up ammunition beyond the capacity of resupply by hand-carry. K rations were short. The native and soldier carriers could not keep up. Besides, a hundred native carriers attached to the regiment could carry only a small part of the supplies needed. Air supply appeared to be the only solution. He ordered an area five hundred yards to the rear to be cleared to receive supplies by air-drop.

Evacuation problems seemed insurmountable. The call for "stretcher" promptly brought an aid man with a litter, but it took three more men to carry the wounded to the aid station. Evacuation to the coast from the aid station was a two-day trip (one way) and took eight men for each casualty.

Thus the supply and evacuation situation was cutting into combat strength. The regiment had been instructed to evacuate its dead to the coastal areas but now the regimental commander discarded this plan and directed that the dead be buried near-by. The bodies would be disinterred and removed to the coast later. This turned out to be a sound and workable solution.

For two days the closeness of terrain had prevented use of heavy MGs and mortars. (The Cannon and AT Companies had been held in the coastal areas.) Every attempt to use mortars had resulted in tree bursts so near that they imperiled friendly troops. Lack of fields of fire—at most there was only twenty feet of visibility in the jungle—made the heavy MGs useless. The heavy-weapons companies were withdrawn from combat, and became responsible for receiving air-drops, resupply of front line troops, and evacuation.

A study of the day's fighting indicated that the Jap resistance was about two infantry battalions. The enemy employed not more than two small mortars, and at least two machine guns. He had no artillery. The regimental commander decided to attack the enemy on the morning of January 4 with both battalions from present positions. He decided, however, to maintain a closer artillery support by direct wire communication and ordered the artillery on Ngelengele to move to Pilowo. This was done without stopping the harassing fires that fell



A wounded Jap is floated down the muddy Pilowo

on the enemy positions intermittently through the night. Telephone communication with the artillery proved invaluable the following day.

An artillery battalion concentration burst upon the enemy positions as dawn came. The infantry battalions moved on northward, but before they had advanced forty yards, the sharp crackle of fire from tree snipers and entrenched Japs began plucking at the underbrush all around. The inaccuracy of the Jap fire, even at close range, was the most astounding impression of the battle.

The fight quickly broke down to squad level. The infighting precluded use of artillery. The doughboy's personal weapons had to decide the issue. Tree snipers were searched out and shot. The ground ahead was raked with fire. Individual Japs in hasty outpost entrenchments were flanked and then destroyed by hand grenade. But the going was slow. The regiment fought all day before the troops began knocking at the main enemy position.

With night coming on the regimental commander had a big decision to make. Should he break contact and pull his troops back to a safer night perimeter defense? Or should he hold on through the sporadic Jap night fighting that was inevitable? The deciding factor was the type of Jap defenses. The enemy was using single standing holes with log fronts but no overhead cover—an inviting artillery target. If artillery was used it would be necessary to withdraw, and so that was the decision. Our troops had barely completed their shallow, two-man foxholes a hundred yards to the south of the enemy when our artillery began to shell his positions. Fragments flew over our forces during the night, but the doughboys only grinned at the thought of what was happening up there in the impact area. The enemy wasn't idle either. During lulls in artillery fire he returned to his positions in the trees near our perimeter and poured in small-arms fire.

With a light under his blacked-out poncho, the colonel studied his map and messages. Fortunately, the supply situation was looking up. The air-drop had worked fine with ninety-five per cent recovery, and the heavy-weapons men had done a tremendous job in carrying the stuff forward.

There was some trouble, however. Only medical supplies had been parachute-dropped; the rest had just been pushed out of the hatches of the C-47s as they flew over at two hundred feet. All communication wire spools were damaged beyond use in the drop. Two men were killed and several injured because they didn't stand clear of the dropping ground. These were lessons learned the hard way at a crucial time.

Ingenuity had improved the evacuation problem. Bamboo rafts were devised to carry the wounded down the Pilowo River to the coastal area. Bamboo poles, eight feet long and three inches through were lashed together in a single layer to make a raft five feet wide. Flotation was just right for a wounded man, yet the raft was light enough to permit the four carriers to lift it and its load over barriers and shallow spots. The carriers guided the raft by wading or swimming alongside as it floated downstream. The trip by raft took one day instead of two, and only four men instead of eight.

The troops were tired—had been tired for days now. But the Japs were tired too. The Colonel knew that not more than two enemy battalions of reduced strength opposed him. The 3d Battalion of the enemy regiment had been identified in the path of his own 3d Battalion's column which was now only two thousand yards to the north, approaching the battle area on Hill 40. He figured that with reasonable progress his 3d Battalion could join the fight during the afternoon of January 5. But he didn't want to wait for this battalion to join in a coordinated attack. He decided to attack the morning of January 5 with the 1st and 2d Battalions from their present positions. The 3d would join the fight from the north at the earliest possible moment.

Two thousand yards to the north, the 3d Battalion was settling down for the night. Its march from Radja had started badly. From the beginning the battalion had been harried by the enemy. On the nights of December 26-27 and 27-28, its perimeter had been attacked viciously by an estimated enemy battalion. (The 3d Battalion of the Jap 211th Infantry. It had been detached from the 211th for a special mission to Radja to await and guide reinforcements from Halmahera. The five reinforcing barges were ambushed after slipping through the Navy PT screen, and were destroyed along with fifty tons of food and supplies.) The battalion had experienced the hardest march of its history. The jungle was more difficult than that encountered by the Pilowo column. Moreover, to join the Hill 40 battle it had to abandon trails for cross-country movements. Time and again, it had been uncertain of its exact position, if not actually lost in the maze of jungle growth. The helpful liaison plane had come to the rescue at such times. The plane would first locate the column (which, of course, was not visible from the air) by permitting itself to be guided in on the radio. "Fly north a little," the radio would instruct the plane. "Now bank right about forty-five degrees . . . you are overhead now!" With the column thus located, the plane would identify terrain features and report the position of the column in reference to them.

Although the battalion had marched and fought its way forward for ten days it was still in fighting trim. The number of Japs killed and found buried along the trail indicated terrible losses for the Japs. The battalion commander, Major Ralph Pate, attributed the lack of enemy resistance during the past two days to the withdrawal of the enemy. Actually, as he learned later, the 3d Battalion, Jap 211th Infantry Regiment, had been destroyed as a military force.

As Company B, commanded by Capt. Cyril C. Kissel, on the right of the 1st Battalion, bestirred itself on the morning of the 5th, the guards shouted the alert and the automatic weapons took up the beat almost immediately. A Banzai attack was bearing down on the extreme right flank. The Japs were cut down in their tracks. The sword-waving officer in command charged to within ten yards of the position, but finally a BAR burst found its mark in his chest and he stopped as if he had hit a brick wall. Still upright, his last act was to throw his Samurai sword into the position.

The officer and eight other Japs were found dead. Why had the enemy abandoned his fortifications for a fight in the open? Did this mean he was abandoning the position? Or was it characteristic Jap mentality to do the unexpected? The answers are lost in the mazes of the Oriental mind.

The main attack started on schedule at 0700 after a final burst of artillery fire. The jungle had become uncommonly quiet with no fire from the Jap positions. The advancing Doughboys became apprehensive. Company B on the right had easy going along a trail, and it advanced rapidly over a slight rise. There just to the front was the enemy position, but without realizing it a squad was moving directly into the path of a cleverly concealed Jap machine gun. Scarcely ten feet from the squad, the muzzle of the gun spat flame, and within five seconds eight members of the squad lay dead or wounded. The next squad hit the ground barely fifty feet from the machine gun. Four men on the right of the squad moved to the east and flanked the gun emplacement. Two grenades finished it off before it could do any more damage.

Far to the west on the left flank, Company G, commanded by Lt. John Weatherwax, was affected by this action. When the machine gun opened fire on Company B, a Jap machine gun opposite Company G also started to fire. Apparently the two guns were tied into a final protective fire plan, and the fire of one was the signal to fire the second. Fortunately, Company G had not arrived on the position when this fire was laid down. It was a small task for them to take out this gun





*Flamethrower operator opens up on a pillbox during the final assault on Hill 40*

which had prematurely disclosed its position. The two machine guns proved to be the last of the organized defense. The 1st and 2d Battalions rushed the remaining Jap riflemen and proceeded to mop up the position.

The devastation in the Jap perimeter was terrific. The aid station and CP had been blown to pieces by artillery fire. Tree-bursts were much in evidence and flying fragments had taken a terrible toll. During the course of the three-day battle the enemy had buried his dead in shallow graves. The continuity of battle on the Jap side was recorded by the scenes around the strongpoints. The bodies of the Japs killed in the early stages of the fight had been buried completely. Those



*136th men bathe at the mouth of the Pilowo upon their return to the coast*

killed later were in shallow graves with the arms and legs protruding. The unburied bodies were those killed in the final assault.

They were short of food, but had adequate supply of medical, signal and engineer supplies. The radio sets and fire-control instruments were of excellent quality and workmanship. There were 150 gas masks in a central dump, but no other chemical store. The prize capture was a sign that read "Morita (211) CP."

The 1st and 2d Battalions continued to the north to pursue any Jap remnants, and to join with the 3d Battalion. The forces met at 1400 without encountering any more enemy units. It was verified that the 211th Infantry Regiment, less the 3d Battalion, had constituted the resistance on Hill 40; that they had been ordered to hold the position at all costs; and that no more than forty Japs, some of whom were wounded, had made good their escape.

The campaigning ended on January 14, 1945, twenty days after it began. During that time 870 Japs had been killed and 10 captured. Our casualties were 46 killed in action, 104 wounded and 23 injured in action. Not since Buna had the doughboy fought over terrain so rugged, dank and dismal.

Morotai ended up as strictly a 136th Infantry show. Within the regiment it was Lt. Colonel Sauser's 2d Battalion that bore the brunt

of the offensive. It was on Morotai that the trend began that later typified all 136th actions. No matter where the regiment was committed the 2d Battalion unfailingly caught the roughest piece of the fight. It was that way in the Morotai wilderness and followed an identical pattern on the Kennon Road and Skyline Ridge when the battalion fought on Luzon.

Troops underwent a cruel indoctrination into the agonies of combat but on Morotai a latent hatred of the Japanese first awakened. Here they learned that the enemy was tricky, merciless and unpredictable. Here they vowed vengeance for the all-night harassments, the cleverly executed ambushes and the Division's dead. Veterans now, they realized that the road ahead would be full of the same sort of action until Japan capitulated.

Field artillery performed magnificently on Morotai. When the 136th Infantry and the enemy were locked in costly stalemate on Hill 40, it was the howitzers of the 123d and 210th Field Artillery Battalions that shifted the balance of power to the Golden Cross. Their thunderous volleys broke the back of a stubborn Jap defense which would not yield to rifle and grenade. Capt. Ben Conrad, S-3 of the 2d Battalion, paid the redlegs a fine tribute with his description of subdued Hill 40. One of the first to reach the crest, Conrad called the sight greeting him "truly a carnage with mangled bodies and wrecked weapons littering the hilltop for yards around." From the Second Battle for Morotai came the complete infantry confidence in artillery which endured and was furthered in each succeeding operation.

Gallantry was an oft-displayed trait throughout the abbreviated campaign. Singled out for special commendation was the Medical Detachment of the 2d Battalion, 136th Infantry, commanded by Capt. Harold Tannenbaum. General Clarkson cited this team of medics in Division general orders. Their devotion to duty and spirit of self-sacrifice was stirring. Time and time again aid men of this detachment voluntarily went out alone into the twenty-yard strip of jungle separating opposing forces in search of casualties. Medics with the battalion aid station had it no easier. Snipers, raiding parties, and all the harassing devices that made the Jap respected as a jungle campaigner were thrown at the aid station.

Private Marion Urban's heroism typified the work of the detachment. A Fox Company aid man, Private Urban repeatedly made the trip out into "no man's land" to drag a casualty back to safety. The proximity of enemy weapons had no discernible effect on him. Bullets shredding the bush around him did not deter him from ministering to

the wounded. Urban was killed at the fag end of the fight while trying to rescue a Fox Company squad leader caught on exposed ground in a murderous cross-fire. He was posthumously awarded the Silver Star, first 136th man to be decorated for gallantry in action in World War II.

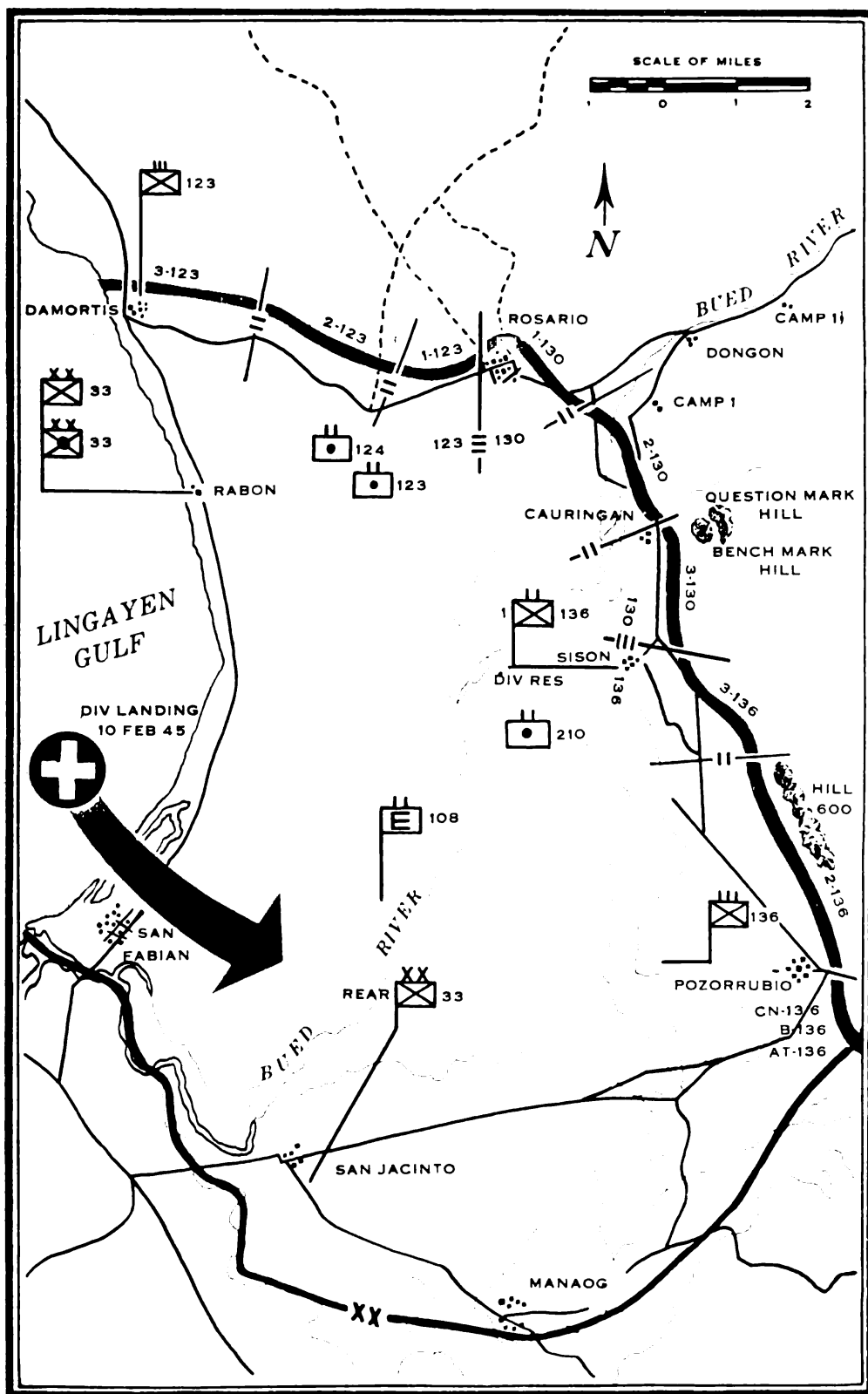
Colonel Cavenee, a line infantryman throughout all of his twenty-eight years of Army service, set the example for his troops in courage and leadership. Disdaining to direct the action from a rear-area CP, the gruff Missourian personally led the final attack forward. Encouraging or driving the assault units as the situation dictated, the sharp-featured regimental commander went up the slopes of Hill 40 with his rifle companies. He too received the Silver Star.

Others cited for heroism included Lt. Henry L. Lowrance, Staff Sgt. Adolph Stebe and Sgt. Joseph J. Wujcik. Lieutenant Lowrance, leading a squad-size patrol, earned a Silver Star for making a one-man raid on a Japanese pillbox. A few seconds after lobbing the grenade through the embrasure Lowrance was instantly killed by a sniper's bullet. Sergeants Stebe and Wujcik, 2d Battalion squad leaders, gave their lives so that their units might be relieved from brutal enemy pressure.

Sergeant Stebe rushed a Nip Nambu that had his squad pinned down on a straight stretch of jungle trail. As he grenaded the gun and motioned his men forward a rifleman brought him down from almost point-blank range. Wujcik's squad was in a similar situation. Intent on getting his force past the enemy, the squad leader rose to his feet, drawing Jap fire away from the remainder of his group. Taking advantage of this diversion, riflemen swarmed in on the machine gun but not before Sergeant Wujcik had been killed.

No public announcement of the 33d's entry into combat was made by General MacArthur. Japanese intelligence had as yet failed to identify the Golden Cross as being operational in the Southwest Pacific. GHQ therefore decided to postpone publication of the Second Battle for Morotai until the Division was engaged in a major campaign.

While the regiments were reassembling on the Gila Peninsula word was received via Armed Forces Radio Service that Luzon had been invaded on 9 January. Two corps of Sixth Army had firmly established a wide beachhead and were striking for Manila. Combat-lost and damaged equipment was replaced as soon as the Division reached its bivouac area. Troops did not need a field order to describe the next move on the 33d's combat agenda. Everyone knew that the Philippines were dead ahead.



Map 8: The Division line on 15 February 1945



## Chapter 6: Luzon

L UZON commanded the attention of the world in January 1945. In keeping with his vow made in 1942 following the fall of Bataan, General MacArthur had returned. Though the routes from Buna to Lingayen had been three years in the making, American forces were now entering the climax phase of the Pacific War. Recent successes, principally the Battle of Leyte where more than 110,000 enemy troops had been slaughtered, slowly swung the balance of power away from Japan. Luzon would be the most indicative campaign of the entire conflict. Victory here presaged a foreseeable final victory. Anything less could mean a drawn-out stalemate.

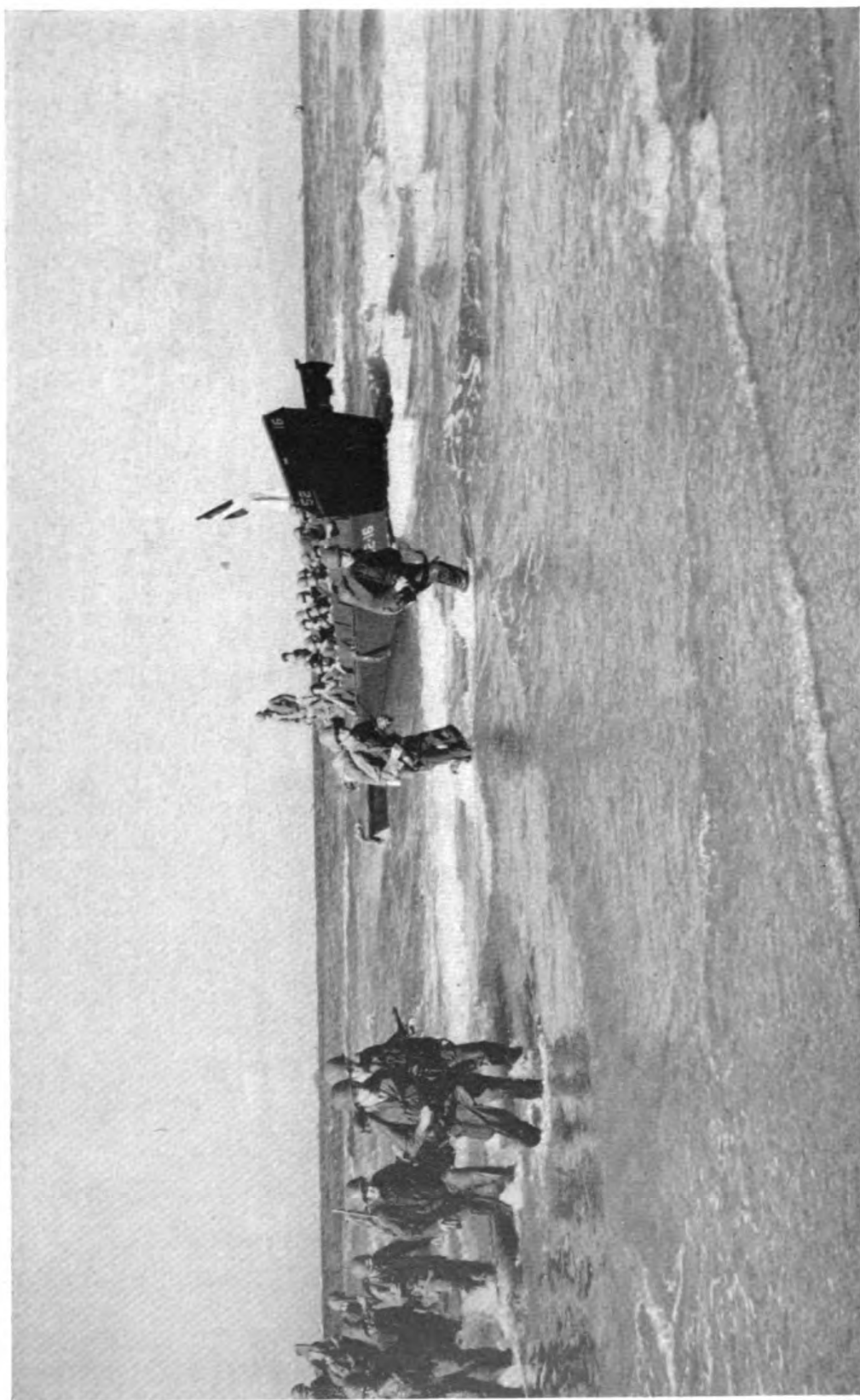
Now, after almost four years of preparation, the 33d Division was ready to become a part of the Pacific "big picture." Eighth Army headquarters made it official on 16 January by ordering the Golden Cross from Morotai to Luzon. Upon landing at Lingayen, the Division was scheduled to come under Sixth Army control. Date of departure from the Moluccas was set for 26 January.

After the usual feverish period of re-equipping and loading, the Division convoy, composed of APAs and LSTs, cast off from Gila Peninsula on the prescribed date. Four days out of Morotai the fleet of troop carriers picked up the 123d RCT convoy sailing north from New Guinea. For the first time since 1 September 1944 the 33d Division was assembled as a consolidated unit.

On 6 February the convoy put in at Leyte Gulf to take on fuel and water. As the vessels idly swung at anchor, men crowded the rails, eager for a glimpse of the recent battleground. Beaches where the 7th, 24th and 96th Infantry Divisions and the 1st Cavalry Division had landed the previous October were plainly visible. One could see a gutted mass of coconut trees beyond the beach stand in spectacular symmetry, their fronds sheared by naval gunfire that had prefaced the assault. These testimonials to destruction coupled with the peaceful silence hanging over the beach and water combined to form an incongruous picture.

Lingayen Gulf was reached at dawn of 9 February. The ships slowly steamed in column up the 65-mile-long gulf and dropped anchor a short distance from the shore. Troops were informed that they would remain on board overnight while landing plans were coordinated with authorities on the beach. With nothing to do but ready weapons and equipment, the men took advantage of this lull to study their new "home."

To the south lay the much talked-about Central Plain of Luzon. In orientation lectures on the Philippines given during the New Guinea



*Golden Cross riflemen wade ashore at San Fabian*



*This Japanese coast artillery piece near Rosario was knocked out by the D-day barrage*

stay this broad expanse of flatland had been stressed as a possible Division zone of action. Golden Cross troops, trained in jungle warfare, had looked forward to engaging the enemy on the plain; not in an anticipatory sense but confident that American superiority in weapons would shorten the campaign and reduce casualties. Their confidence was borne out—but not by the 33d. Sixth Army forces had driven south from the gulf shortly after landing and by 9 February Jap resistance had been pushed back to Manila. The plain had already been seized.

That left but one area in which the 33d could be tactically committed: the towering, tree-covered mountains which suddenly rose from the end of the Central Plain and stretched northward as far as the eye could see. They were forbidding in appearance, their peaks covered by eddies of mist and fog. Dense palls of smoke rolled off many of their slopes as aftermaths to recent bombing attacks. It was an awesome sight for some, but the infantryman inwardly shuddered. He knew that before he left this island he would have to walk and fight over the majority of those mountains. It was Morotai again, but this time with 7,000-foot-high hills.

Debarkation began on the morning of the 10th, D plus 32 on Luzon. Unloading progressed without incident and by dusk the combat elements of the Division had closed into assembly areas. Here they

pitched temporary camps while waiting for orders to move into the fight. All men were immediately brought up to date on the current tactical situation on the island.

Following the D-day landings which were met with sporadic small-arms and mortar fire, a "flying column" made up of the 37th Division and 1st Cavalry Division was formed to swarm down the Central Plain. While these divisions were forging a path to the gates of Manila other Sixth Army divisions kept the bulk of Japanese forces contained in the mountains north and east of the plain. This had been the mission of I Corps. The 25th Division was sent on a straight drive across Luzon while the 43d Division and 158th RCT pivoted at the beach and edged into the foothills of the Caraballo Mountains. Although bypassed groups and defeated remnants managed to work back into the Caraballos, Jap commanders were prevented from counter-attacking from this high ground.

Division was attached to I Corps on 12 February, receiving its initial commitment orders at the same time. Field Order No. 11, Headquarters 33d Infantry Division, was published at noon of the following day listing the Division mission and those of subordinate elements. It read in part:

*33d Inf Div:*

- (1) Passes to control CG, I Corps effective 0800, 12 Feb 45.
- (2) Relieves elements of the 43d Inf Div and 158 RCT in the Pozorrubio-Rosario-Damortis areas.
- (3) Upon effecting relief of the 43d Inf Div the 33d Inf Div will continue missions assigned the 43d Inf Div as follows:
  - (a) Secure key terrain within its zone of action.
  - (b) Push vigorous reconnaissance N of Camp 1-Rosario-Damortis road and E of Pozorrubio-Bobonan-Camp 1 road to determine enemy strength and dispositions.
  - (c) Utilizing forces available rapidly and completely eliminate enemy pockets of resistance remaining in rear areas.
  - (d) Be prepared to redispense forces along high ground N of Camp 1-Rosario-Damortis road and E of Pozorrubio-Bobonan-Camp 1 road in order that present positions may be held by minimum forces.

Troops of the 123d Infantry were first in the Division to assume front-line duties. Leaving an assembly area at San Fabian, Colonel Serff's men took over positions on the high ground north of the Damortis-Rosario road held by the 158th RCT. They accomplished the relief on the afternoon of the 13th. The 3d Battalion, under Major Sanford I. Wolff, anchored the left flank, holding high ground a thousand yards north of Damortis while Major James L. Cregg's 2d



*One of the first rounds fired by Division Artillery unearthed a half million dollars' worth of silver pesos buried under the Rosario-Damortis road*



Battalion moved on to commanding terrain midway between the two *barrios*. Rosario, right flank of the regimental line, was held by the 1st Battalion, led by Lt. Col. Charles F. Coates.

A day later the 130th Infantry left San Fabian en route to positions on the 123d's right. Colonel Collins' Blackhawks spelled the 172d Infantry (43d Division) on a horseshoe-shaped line running from Rosario to Sison. Two battalions were concentrated in and east of Rosario while the 3d Battalion inherited positions along the foothills near Cauringan. Lt. Col. Ernest D. Jessup, Major Richard Askren and Lt. Col. Orville Minton commanded the 1st, 2d and 3d Battalions, respectively.

Last to leave the initial assembly areas was the 136th Infantry, commanded by Colonel Cavenue. On 15 February two of his battalions relieved four 43d Division battalions on positions east of the Sison-Pozorrubio road. Lt. Colonel Sauser's 2d Battalion, shock troops on Morotai, was given another hot spot in Hill 600 which ran from the center of the regimental zone of action to the Pozorrubio flank. Three 136th companies secured the Pozorrubio sector which also formed the Division's right flank. They were Baker Company, commanded by Captain Kissel; Cannon, under Capt. August J. Duchala; and Antitank, led by Capt. William D. Garland. The 3d Battalion, commanded by Major John M. Farnell, assumed responsibility for the area extending southward from Sison to the edge of Hill 600. Major Milton Ehrlich's 1st Battalion remained in bivouac near Sison with the designation of Division reserve.

Supporting arms and services followed the regiments into the line. The 122d, 124th and 210th Field Artillery Battalions, all serving 105mm howitzers, were emplaced to best support their combat team complements. Lt. Col. Roland P. Carlson's 122d augmented the 123d Infantry; the 124th under Lt. Col. Harold O. Carlson—the Carlsons are brothers—provided fires for the 130th Infantry while the 136th received support from the 210th Field Artillery, commanded by Lt. Col. Thomas Truxtun. General support for the Division came from Lt. Col. George McClure's 123d Field Artillery Battalion, composed of 155mm howitzers.

Medics and engineers filled out the combat teams. The 108th Engineer Combat Battalion, commanded by Lt. Col. Francis P. Kane, gave each regiment one of its letter companies. Able went to the 123d, Baker to the 130th and Charley was assigned to the 136th. Collecting Companies A, B and C of the 108th Medical Battalion were likewise attached to the infantry elements. Clearing Company, under Major

John Savage, prepared to receive Division casualties at Damortis. Battalion commander for the medics was Lt. Col. Durand Smith, a Chicago physician.

With the beginning of Division operations in the Philippines, the Division command and staff organization was as follows: General Clarkson, commanding; General Myers, Assistant Division Commander; Colonel McAnsh, Chief of Staff; Lt. Col. Frank S. Singer, G-1; Lt. Colonel Sackton, G-2; Lt. Col. William M. Haycock, G-3; and Lt. Col. Leslie Ireland, G-4.

Special Staff members included: Lt. Col. Joseph Martz, Adjutant General; Lt. Col. Ernest Bauman, Inspector General; Lt. Col. Jacob M. Arvey, Judge Advocate General; Lt. Col. Fred M. Curl, Chemical Warfare Officer; Lt. Col. Ralph P. Wagner, Signal Officer; Lt. Col. Anthony Strak, Ordnance Officer; Lt. Col. Russell K. Kuhns, Division Quartermaster; Lt. Col. William H. Delihant, Finance Officer; Father (Lt. Col.) William J. Rogers, Division Chaplain; Major Eli J. Paris, Special Services Officer; Major Victor Warner, Provost Marshal; Lt. Col. Timothy J. Mullen, Surgeon; and Major George Jenkins, Jr., Headquarters Commandant.

A formidable host of enemy faced the Golden Cross at every point along its front. Opposing the Division were the Japanese 23d Division and the 58th Independent Mixed Brigade, both veterans of the China campaigns. Mainstays of Yamashita's 14th Area Army, they were sworn to prevent a repetition of the Leyte fiasco. Their flaming desire to halt the American military machine was reflected in a captured document written by one of Yamashita's division commanders shortly before the D-day landings.

. . . if the battle situation develops unfavorably for us [it read] and we find ourselves under continuous enemy pressure, we must be able to hold a route of withdrawal to the mountainous terrain around Baguio. Therefore, in order to hang on doggedly in the Philippines and await the plans of later years, it is necessary to organize quickly and in such a manner as to be able to establish permanent installations which can hold out for months and years. The mountainous terrain in the vicinity of Baguio is suitable for this purpose.

## Chapter 7: Introduction to the Hills

IN THE course of the Pacific War there doubtless have been engagements as fraught with hardship and self-sacrifice as the 130th Infantry Regiment's battle for Bench Mark and Question Mark Hills. But to the men of this unit the four-day battle—simply a stepping-stone to victory in a single campaign—represented land warfare at its worst: ninety-six hours of constant close combat capped by periods of intense thirst, hunger, lack of medical aid, and costly stalemate with the enemy. Blackhawk troops received a cruel baptism of fire on the deceptive slopes of Bench Mark. There was no slow introduction to the capabilities of the courageous Japanese, no gradual acquaintance with the ugliness of hand-to-hand combat; instead green troops were committed to a fight which opened on a furious note and mounted in ferocity with each passing day.

A Nature lover might comment on the beauty of Question Mark if he were to survey it from a purely physical standpoint. It rises like a dull green giant out of the gray foothills lying south of the Caraballo Mountains. Fringing the broad Central Plain, its heights provide the dominating terrain feature in the Sison area. The 2,500-foot hill is copiously covered with dry *cogon* grass, and numerous wooded gullies sharply indent its steep slopes. Between Question Mark and the lush rice paddies strewn along the flatland skirting Sison stands Bench Mark, similar in angle of rise but almost a thousand feet lower. With all-around observation available from both summits each was able to serve as watchdog for the other. A steep 600-foot-wide draw separates the twin citadels.

Bench Mark and Question Mark are the two principal landmarks in the elongated chain of foothills leading into the Caraballo range. These hills provided the enemy with a naturally formidable first line of defense for Luzon's wild mountain country. Individual links in the narrow chain were heavily fortified to serve as guardians for General Tomoyuki Yamashita's Baguio headquarters to the north—actually the Nip nerve center in the Philippines. Baguio, famed Far Eastern resort, was I Corps' prime objective.

Question Mark received its unusual name from 43d Division artillery liaison pilots. When viewed from the air, its semicircular crest seemed to compress itself into the shape of a vast question mark. Bench Mark too came by its title naturally. Maps of the hill area disclosed a surveyor's bench mark—a small triangle denoting a fixed point of height—printed atop the network of contour lines representing the hill. In order to suitably describe the terrain to higher headquarters, 43d Division ground commanders dubbed it Bench Mark Hill. When 33d

Division troops assumed tactical responsibility for the sector these names passed on to the 130th Infantry.

A unique, if not incredible, tactical situation confronted 26-year-old Lt. Colonel Minton when his 3d Battalion, 130th Infantry, relieved the 3d Battalion, 169th Infantry. Despite several days on the ground and repeated attacks against the Japs on the summit, the Winged Victory doughboys—veterans of the Solomon Islands jungles—succeeded in taking only the reverse slope of the hill. Large groups of enemy were strongly entrenched on the crest, forward slope, and the remaining two sides of Bench Mark. Here were two forces struggling for possession of a single terrain feature; both on the hill in strength with just a few yards separating the opposing fronts. Immediate action had to be undertaken to remedy this peculiar impasse, not only for the sake of battalion security but because Bench Mark barred the entrance into the mountains. No general advance could commence until the hill was in Golden Cross possession. That meant, too, that Question Mark must fall as part of a single operation. Preparations to achieve both ends began as soon as the riflemen were assigned positions.

In the first disposition of troops, Company K, led by Capt. Elbert J. Hicks, dug in on the reverse slope of Bench Mark just below the summit. Company L, with newly promoted Capt. Norman H. Litz in command, constructed a perimeter around a small knob to the left-rear of the King Company position. Sections of heavy machine guns from Company M followed each unit into the line. Mike Company's 81mm mortars were grouped in defilade almost a thousand yards west of Bench Mark. A grove of ripening mango trees in the sleepy *barrio* of Cauringan—close to the foot of Bench Mark—was selected as the site for the battalion CP. Company I, under red-haired Capt. Alan J. Kennedy, and the remaining heavy-machine-gun platoon were bivouacked there in battalion reserve.

Combat-reconnaissance patrols began operations at dawn, 16 February. K and L dispatched small groups led by Lts. Robert R. Kimball and Alfred L. Angulo to bring back answers to these vital queries: Strength and disposition of enemy forces on Bench Mark? Number and location of enemy machine guns and mortars? Does the enemy have a reserve to commit in the event of an attack? If so, how large? These questions went largely unanswered. Patrols were unable to force their way through the Jap defense. All they could do was engage the enemy in a fight, hoping to make him commit most of his fire, and then make an approximation of his strength and number of automatic weapons.

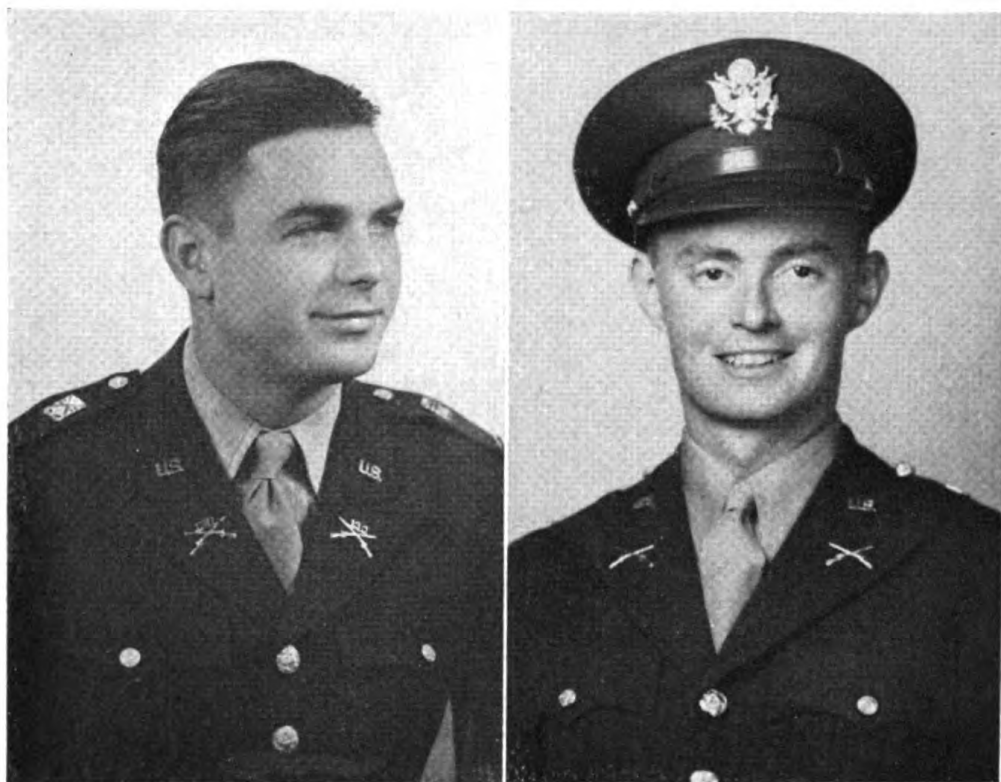
Division intelligence was unable to add much to the picture. Estimates on enemy strength compiled by the 43d Division ran anywhere from a single infantry company to a reinforced battalion. However, G-2 was able to supply enough information to keep the situation from becoming a complete enigma. It was known that elements of the 71st Infantry Regiment and the 58th Independent Mixed Brigade garrisoned Bench Mark. These units were part of the Japanese 23d Division, a veteran force, but currently suffering from five weeks of continuous heavy action.

Enigmatic or not, Bench Mark and Question Mark had to be hit without further delay. Lt. Colonel Minton laid plans for a coordinated battalion attack to take place on 19 February. His scheme called for K and L Companies to advance up the reverse slope of Bench Mark and secure the summit and forward slope. During this phase of the drive, Company I was scheduled to leave its Cauringan bivouac area and follow King Company up Bench Mark. When Question Mark was deemed ready for an assault, Captain Kennedy, commanding I, had the mission of swinging around the right flank of Bench Mark, moving down its side, crossing the large draw and then hitting the second objective. Artillery support would be plentiful. The Division's battalion of 155mm howitzers, together with the 210th Field Artillery Battalion, stood ready to provide fire for both advances.

Patrol actions highlighted the waiting period. Throughout daylight hours, 3d Battalion units continued their probing, seeking to unearth another piece to the Bench Mark jigsaw puzzle. The enemy fought these movements with fire only. His troops never left their strong-points. At night it was a different story. Raiding parties harassed the company perimeters constantly. Night-long grenade duels were commonplace. With the coming of dawn, the Nips would collect their casualties and withdraw to their own positions. Few 3d Battalion troops were harmed by these forays, but all soon became accustomed to the fact that combat against the Japanese automatically brought with it tense and sleepless nights.

Dawn broke hot and hazy on D-day. Artillery pieces opened up with daybreak, heralding the impending assault with fifteen solid minutes of fire. At the conclusion of the barrage a smoke shell boomed into the enemy positions, notifying the infantry that the concentration was ended. During the shelling, Captain Litz moved up until his forward elements were on the same lateral line with Company K. When the white phosphorus round exploded, both companies advanced abreast.





*Captains Elbert J. Hicks and Alan J. Kennedy led Companies K and I during the Bench Mark-Question Mark battle*

But difficulties cropped up immediately. Visibility was poor and the inside flanks of the two companies gradually drifted apart. In a matter of minutes radio communication was the sole link between King and Love.

Lack of contact erased any hopes of intercompany coordination. Each unit drove forward into its own separate fight. Company L's action developed rapidly when surprise fire suddenly plunged into its left side from a group of Japanese on a knob jutting out of the northern slope of the objective. This small hill-on-a-hill, devoid of cover, was a poor defensive position. It stood out starkly from the rest of Bench Mark and its barren top was clearly silhouetted against the mountain backdrop. Company L veered off toward this source of fire. In a few minutes they were on the knob, mopping up a small enemy unit with rifle fire and grenades. Litz notified battalion by radio that his troops had killed the Nip holding force and secured the knob with less than ten casualties.

Feeling itself safe from enemy fires from the peak of Bench Mark, the company quickly staged a reorganization and continued forward, seeking to provide fire support for Company K. As soon as the assault

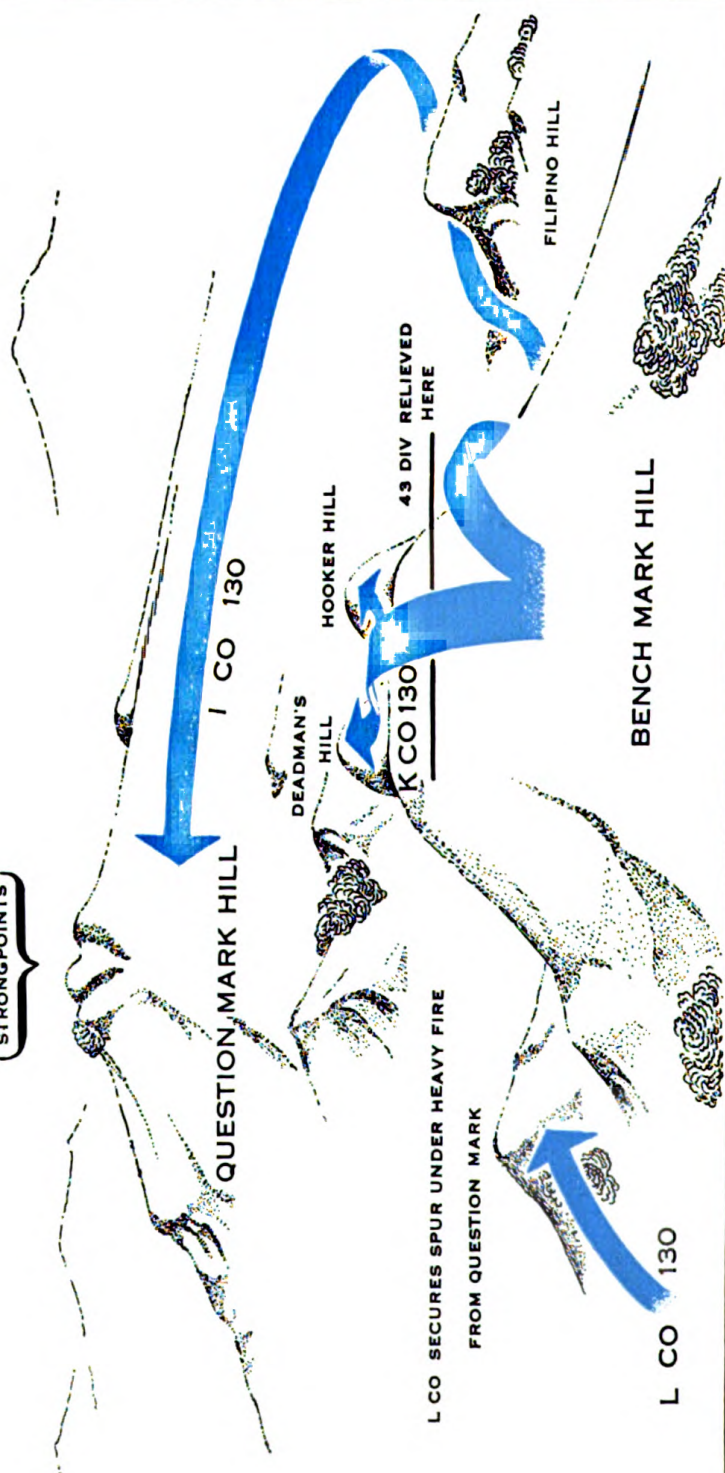
# SITUATION ON BENCH MARK AND QUESTION MARK HILLS 19 FEB 45



NORTH

ENEMY

STRONGPOINTS



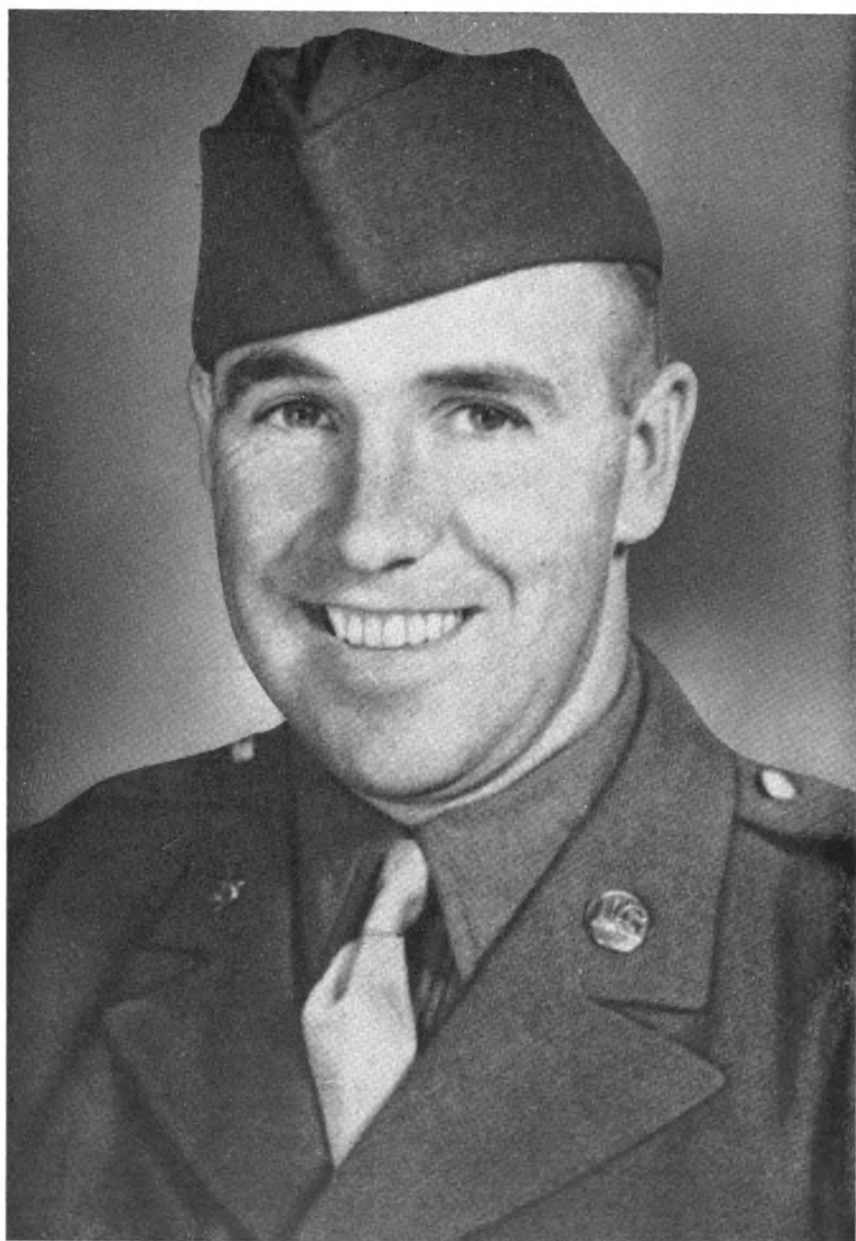
Map 9

platoons finished deploying along the military crest, facing Question Mark, machine-gun fire suddenly swept in from across the draw. The first bursts cut down most of one squad. Heavy-machine-gun fire was called for, and Mike Company responded by setting up a heavy on the exposed forward slope of the compact terrain feature. The gunner got off no more than a few bursts toward Question Mark before he was engaged in a mid-range duel with a rapid-firing Nip Nambu. Having the advantage of concealment, the enemy succeeded in sweeping the M Company gun with a single heavy burst. The gunner was killed instantly and two of his crewmen were seriously wounded. Captain Litz, realizing the critical need for automatic fire, quickly crawled up to the gun, passed the two casualties to the rear, lifted the gunner's body from the piece, and manned the Browning.

Litz re-engaged the same Jap gun that had silenced his weapon a minute before. Firing in long bursts, the company commander succeeded in quieting the offending Nambu, but another Jap machine gunner—off to the right—chose this time to switch his fires on to Love Company's knob. His first rounds killed Captain Litz. Command of the unit passed to Lieutenant Angulo, company executive officer. Angulo immediately attempted to move to more tenable positions, but enemy machine-gun and mortar fire was so heavy that every attempt at movement resulted in additional casualties. Angulo finally ordered his troops to cease maneuver and dig in on the knob. A casualty check disclosed five men had been killed and seventeen wounded in the course of the abbreviated fire fight.

But, meanwhile, what of Company K's advance to the right? Captain Hicks led his men into a fight that closely paralleled Love Company's experience. Company K encountered little resistance during its climb up the reverse slope of Bench Mark and subsequent attack against the summit. Again, a brief hand-to-hand skirmish and another small defensive force was eradicated. Hicks quickly reorganized on the hilltop prior to pushing down the forward slope. Morale was at its peak at this moment; the doughs could visualize no possibility of failure now. They paused just long enough to reshape their lines.

As the lead scouts edged up to the skyline they could see the forward slope dip down sharply only to rise again a hundred yards away where two towering knobs sprouted out of the hillside like overgrown warts. Anxious to maintain his early morning pace, Captain Hicks ordered his forward platoons to advance on the twin knobs. Nips on these features—cunningly concealed inside caves and bunkers—waited until the rear elements of the company had begun to clamber down the



*Lieutenant Robert R. Kimball*

slope before firing at the leading units. The first inkling of the tremendous enemy power contained on the two hills came when Lieutenant Kimball's platoon was suddenly enfiladed by solid bands of machine-gun cross-fire. Japs rose out of their emplacements to throw hand grenades into the ranks of the shocked group.

Heavy machine guns and mortars from the vicinity of Question Mark now entered the fight, adding to the already deafening clamor. Captain Hicks called for all of the supporting weapons at his command in an effort to offset the effects of Japanese fires. Friendly mortars and artillery proved useless; observers could not range in because of the close proximity of riflemen and the extremely high angle of fire necessary to get a round on the target. Company K's caliber .30 light machine guns had to continually shift position in order to stay in the fight.

Kimball's men, closest to the knobs, suddenly rose from the ground and advanced toward one of the knobs under the urging of their platoon leader. Answering machine guns and mortars with rifles and BARs, the troops doggedly fought their way up to the base of the hill. Sharp grenade exchanges took place here and King Company's casualties rapidly mounted. Lieutenant Kimball managed to break loose from the stalemated line and charged up the hill by himself. Disregarding a painful shrapnel wound sustained in earlier fighting, the young Ohioan spotted two machine guns which seemed to have the attack bottled up. Firing as he advanced, Lieutenant Kimball overran one emplacement, killing the entire crew with carbine fire. He tried identical tactics on the second piece and worked up to within a few paces of the position before he was brought down with a rifle bullet. Enraged and awed by this demonstration of gallantry, his men attempted to follow in his wake but an aroused enemy beat them back to the base of the knob. Lieutenant Kimball was honored with a posthumous award of the Distinguished Service Cross.

Twice more K Company rose to assault but on each occasion the Japanese were able to repel them. During the first effort, S/Sgt. William E. Pavlick, a squad leader, almost forced a breach but accelerated mortar fires from Question Mark nullified his gains. Sergeant Pavlick—like Lieutenant Kimball—knocked out a Nip machine gun. He did it in the same manner, moving in on the emplacement and then killing the crew with rifle fire. Pavlick then motioned to the remnants of his squad to join him and together this team accounted for six more Japs and an additional Nambu. Although twice wounded, he continually exposed himself to provide targets for his men. With two



guns out of the way, Sergeant Pavlick suddenly keeled over and collapsed from loss of blood. But at this point mortar fire halted the brief advance and Pavlick's squad was forced to withdraw, dragging their unconscious leader with them. His heroism earned him a DSC.

Peculiar GI minds, which were still able to deal in grisly humor despite the discouraging state of affairs, had by this time affixed names to the twin hills. One was called Hooker Hill, after S/Sgt. Gerald W. Hooker who had taken over the platoon when Lieutenant Kimball was killed. After the first unsuccessful attack against the other knoll, the grotesque body of a dead rifleman could be seen lying face down, lifeless arms outstretched toward the enemy. This one, more somber in character, was called Dead Man's Hill.

Late afternoon came and the situation continued unchanged. It already had been a gruelling day for King Company: nine dead, twenty-four wounded, and still no closer to its objective than it had been four hours ago. Captain Hicks told Lieutenant Colonel Minton, who had worked forward to the company, that he could make no further gains until the Jap fires coming from Question Mark were neutralized. Here was a job for the support company.

Kennedy and Company I were ready to join the fight. In accordance with the battalion plan they had left Cauringan that morning and 1600 found them grouped on the reverse side of Bench Mark. Colonel Minton gave his instructions to Captain Kennedy: "Move your outfit along the southern slope of Bench Mark. Cut down into the draw and attack Question Mark. King Company can't do a thing until the pressure coming from Question Mark is knocked out. Leave as soon as you can." Upon receipt of this order, Kennedy quickly ordered his platoon leaders to make a last-minute check of ammunition, rations and water. Little did he know that water was going to be the controlling factor of his assault on Question Mark.

When Company I began its approach march from Cauringan earlier in the day, all troops carried full ammunition and food loads but only a single canteen of water. At the time this was not a point for anxiety as maps of Question Mark showed a small creek running along the edge of the spacious draw separating it from Bench Mark. Water could be replenished once the force reached the stream. In this way water needs would be alleviated until the following day when carrying parties would assume the burden of water supply. Consequently, when Kennedy received a report that each man was down to a third of a canteen of water he was not alarmed.

As it turned out, lack of water almost doomed the Question Mark



*Bench Mark Hill*

operation to failure. When Item Company finally reached the alleged stream, Captain Kennedy found nothing but an arid, rock-strewn bed, completely swallowed up by the relentless tropical sun. However, it was too late now for anything but passing regrets: the hour was 1645 and it was imperative to move on to the line of departure without further delay. Item Company maneuvered into jump-off position fifteen minutes later. Hoping to catch the Japanese by surprise, Kennedy declined the use of an artillery preparation. His plan almost worked.

Company I drove to within seventy-five yards of Question Mark's heights before the Nips, completely occupied in harassing King Company, woke up to the fact that a full-scale attack against their strong-point was under way. Hurriedly they diverted most of their fire from Bench Mark to Kennedy's men. Firing along predetermined lines, enemy fire lanes soon cut into the company from frontal, oblique, and flanking positions. Tactics were quickly altered to cope with this new situation. Although its initial impetus was missing, the drive continued to gain ground. Riflemen resorted to advance by fire and movement. Observers could see doughs spring forward, hit the ground, and then open up with M-1 and BAR fire to cover the move of another small group. It was a show worthy of demonstration troops at The Infantry School. Constant repetition of the fire and movement process pulled the front line to within grenade range of the Japanese emplacements.



*Lieutenant James E. Finn*

But here it stalled. Some men attempted individual charges but they were cut down by supporting riflemen and the profusion of armed grenades which the Japs rolled down the slope toward the company. Overwhelming enemy fire superiority augmented by Item's extreme fatigue and thirst and approaching darkness combined to discourage further offensive operations. Captain Kennedy radioed his situation to the battalion CP. Lieutenant Colonel Minton ordered him to dig in, adjust protective fires and hold on until the following morning when a supply of water and ammunition would be forthcoming.

Several critical problems confronted Kennedy as he planned his defense for the night. None of his casualties had been evacuated to battalion simply because no safe route of withdrawal existed. Some men were seriously wounded and might die if they were forced to spend the night on the slopes of Question Mark Hill. Nevertheless, the weary company commander realized that evacuation attempts made in broad daylight were bound to be disastrous. Japanese machine guns and mortars were zeroed in on every blade of grass on the hillside. Perhaps evacuation could begin after dark, but certainly not before. Lack of water posed a most serious problem. Intense thirst had already cut down Item Company's combat efficiency. Kennedy didn't have to ask his men how they were holding up without the precious liquid. All he had to do was run his own swollen tongue over cracked and blistered lips to supply the answer.

In a move to protect the casualties from further harm, Captain Kennedy decided to construct two perimeters: one just below the crest of Question Mark to encompass most of his troops and another four hundred yards below for litter cases and a squad-sized rear guard. As soon as the front line of infantrymen began to dig in, the enemy naturally perceived the company's intentions. They retaliated with concentrations of machine-gun and mortar fire which hit the troops as soon as they had unsheathed entrenching tools. Friendly mortar and artillery fire was called for to cover defensive preparations. A forward platoon leader, Lt. James E. Finn, took over the job of sensing and adjusting as the digging swiftly continued.

Not content to fight fire with fire, the enemy closest to Lieutenant Finn's platoon left the safety of Question Mark and bore down the hill on the handful of men who by this time had partial protection from flying shrapnel. Finn relayed a call to Kennedy for accelerated fire and stood erect in his partly dug foxhole to adjust it. The Japanese fell back at this point but reorganized and drove forward a moment later. Again Lieutenant Finn rose to his full height to bring friendly

bursts into the charging Japanese. The Nips were stopped a second time, but Lieutenant Finn was killed by an enemy rifleman's parting shot. His self-sacrifice was recognized by a posthumous award of the Distinguished Service Cross.

With Finn dead and the Japanese back on the crest of Question Mark, Captain Kennedy crawled to the edge of his position and continued adjustment of protective fires. Normally the artillery places these fires at a minimum distance of a hundred yards from the fringes of a perimeter, but now Item's commander insisted on bringing them in much closer. Over the protests of the fire direction center, he tightened the ring of high explosives until some rounds were falling within thirty yards of his troops. Satisfied that the enemy would hesitate before essaying a move through this curtain of steel, Kennedy slowly returned to his CP. Every man he passed en route offered some evidence of the torture caused by the lack of water. Some lay in their foxholes and sucked in huge gulps of air to ease the pain of their aching throats. Others attempted to keep up their strength by downing a D ration, but the sounds of their retching and vomiting were sickening as the rich chocolate clogged their parched throats. The sporadic moans of the wounded only added to the general hellishness of the situation.

Kennedy again called battalion and reiterated his earlier statement that unless water was dispatched at dawn his company could not function as an efficient combat force. Lieutenant Colonel Minton notified him that an air drop would be made the following morning if carrying parties were unable to work their way forward. Regarding casualty evacuation, Company I was told to care for its wounded as best as it could until litter teams came up the next day. Some medical parties had attempted to reach Question Mark when Kennedy made his first report but darkness and enemy patrols forced them to turn back to the battalion aid station.

General Myers, charged with coordinating ground activities in this sector, kept abreast of the situation at the 3d Battalion CP on Bench Mark. He was quick to recognize the severity of the situation and to realize that continued high casualties and lack of water would greatly jeopardize operational success. So bleak was the picture that the Assistant Division Commander felt it necessary to make an immediate first-hand report to General Clarkson. He left Bench Mark at dusk of 19 February and reached the Division CP near Rabon a few hours later.

This was the 33d's first combat crisis. Bench Mark and Question





*Brigadier General Donald J. Myers and Colonel Arthur S. Collins, Jr., directed the Bench Mark-Question Mark fight*

Mark were vital cogs in Jap defensive strategy. Higher headquarters wanted them at once, regardless of cost.

As a result of the conference between the two generals, the 3d Battalion was reinforced that same night. Able Company, 136th Infantry, in Division reserve near Sison, was ordered to proceed to Bench Mark without delay. Commanded by Capt. James W. Cavender, Company A arrived at the 3d Battalion CP at 0200. Here, Lieutenant Colonel Minton gave Cavender the details of his mission which was to attack at dawn and relieve Company I on position.

General Clarkson personally undertook to solve the water problem. First, he instructed G-3 to establish an advance CP at Cauringan the next morning. Since air drops held little promise of success, he scoured the Division for a carrying party, finally settling on the Engineers since all infantry and field artillery was committed to the fight. Coincidental with the orders to Cavender, Lieutenant Colonel Kane, Division Engineer, was told to form a 100-man carrying party and to personally report it to General Clarkson at Cauringan at dawn. At the same time, G-4 was sent out in search of 100 water cans and a like number of packboards. Filled water cans were to be at the advance CP when the Engineers arrived.

Men and equipment came in on schedule. However, the Engineer detachment made no attempt to conceal its disgust at being assigned such a menial chore. No one wanted to sidestep a fight, but few rel-

ished the task of serving as pack mules in the oppressive heat. Detecting this discordant note, General Clarkson grouped the Engineers around him and discussed the importance of their assignment. In low subdued tones he mentioned their infantry comrades up front, many already semi-conscious for lack of water and others requiring immediate evacuation. He stressed that this party carried with it the Division's chance for victory on Question Mark. A transformation overcame the group as the General spoke. The Engineers realized that this mission was infinitely more important than any they could accomplish in the normal pursuit of their duties. They gallantly shouldered their heavy loads and lined up behind Company A, prepared to follow it until Company I was contacted.

Item spent a quiet night on the slope of the objective. Friendly artillery kept the Nips in their own positions, preventing them from harassing the listless unit. But without combat activity to occupy them, the men were left to concentrate on their maddening need for relief. Although the night was cool, no one could sleep. Speech was restricted to a minimum. Orders issued by officers and noncoms sounded more like animal noises than commands. Food too was out of the question. Arid systems were incapable of retaining the solid rations. Cracked lips presented constant sources of discomfort. One thing only prevented morale from crumbling: water would be dropped at 0830.

A new cycle of anguish began at dawn. Heat waves danced on the grass as the sun beat down with unusual force. As Company I rose to survey the situation, bursts of machine-gun fire cut into the perimeter from altogether new angles. Thoughts of the air drop vanished for the moment. Reports from the farthest point of the position quickly reached Kennedy at the CP: the Nips had reinforced their position, emplacing a platoon midway between the two company perimeters. Kennedy risked a quick visual reconnaissance to ascertain whether the enemy held full control of the wide stretch of open terrain separating his forces. He could pick out three or four machine guns on each of his flanks, all well dug in and capable of throwing impassable bands of fire across the hillside.

If such a thing were possible, Company I was in sadder circumstances than the day before. If an effort were made to knock out this new force, the troops would fall prey to the large number of Japanese still entrenched on Question Mark. On the other hand, if a decision were made to resume an attack against the crest of the hill, it invited severe casualties from the flanks and rear. Company I was isolated for all

practical purposes. Kennedy knew, however, that Company A, 136th Infantry, had been detailed to fight through to him. He had no choice but to remain within the confines of his defensive position and leave his other group to its own devices.

Some measure of cheer enveloped Item Company at 0825 when the C-47 was sighted as it jockeyed into position for the drop run. Every eye followed the twin-engined cargo plane as it roared across the hillside. Numerous crates and containers poured out of the open cabin door. Half-crazed riflemen braved enemy fire to sprint out and recover the precious supplies. As the last piece was carried to the CP, a collective cry of sorrow escaped every man's lips. Not a drop of water had been kicked out of the plane. Disgusted with this ineptness, Kennedy radioed the battalion CP and angrily demanded that another drop be made at once. He was placated with the response that a misinterpretation of orders had caused the foul-up and that the plane would be re-loaded as soon as it returned to its base.

During this interim, the company's command group debated on the use of supporting fires against the Japanese dug in below them. Artillery was out. Long rounds would explode in the main perimeter, short ones on the wounded. Instead a decision was made to employ Company M's 81mm mortars, easier to control than the high-velocity howitzers. Capt. Arthur L. Wallace, Mike Company leader, was called and given an extensive description of the disposition of friendly troops surrounding the target area. He notified the Item CP that he thought rounds could be worked into the enemy without endangering friendly forces. A few seconds later, with every man in Company I below ground-level, the 81s began to fall. Wallace made good his prediction. Preliminary rounds were near-misses and it took only minor adjustments to bring them onto the target. A constant harassing fire was maintained.

Sensitive ears picked up the sound of the C-47 a short time later. Again the large plane hedge-hopped over the slope and disgorged its supplies. It was water, all right; troops could see the five-gallon cans oscillate at the ends of supply chutes. But this time the billowing aerial umbrellas carried all of the cans directly into Nip positions. Men wept unashamedly at this cruel trick of fate. It would have been the spark needed to touch off a general panic had not Captain Kennedy risen to the occasion. Swollen and parched like everyone else, the Item commander put on a show of calmness and confidence impossible to ignore. He cockily reassured his infantrymen that Able Company would break through shortly with every needed commodity.

Throughout these developments Captain Cavender had led his company across defiladed portions of Bench Mark until he reached the valley separating the two hills. During a reconnaissance to determine the most advantageous route of approach to Company I, riflemen of the lead platoon sighted Kennedy's smaller perimeter. Able Company was prepared to attack shortly after the second unsuccessful air drop. Cavender contacted Lieutenant Colonel Minton by radio to arrange for fires to support the breakthrough. Again artillery was deemed inadvisable and the task of providing fire support fell to mortarmen. Company A's light mortars hammered the slope of Question Mark with a brief barrage while battalion mortars dumped a volley of smoke shells into the draw to screen the attack from Nips on the forward slope of Bench Mark.

Technical Sergeant Emil B. Weber's 2d Platoon, designated as the assault force, jumped off as soon as preparatory and masking fires were completed. No opposition was apparent until the thin skirmish line passed through the group of Item casualties. As soon as the enemy sighted the green uniforms through the smoky backdrop, they opened up along protective lines. Weber's men were caught in the apex of the cross-firing machine guns. Before he could decide on a counter action, Sergeant Weber was felled by a burst which caught him in the head. S/Sgt. Alphonsus L. Leary, platoon guide and second-in-command, quickly moved up from the rear of the column and assumed command. Despite the heavy fire, Leary was able to lead his unit in a gradual advance that took it within grenade range of several enemy pieces.

Casualties were heavy. Most of the noncommissioned officers had been hit by the initial fires. Sgt. Walter Shadley was killed at Weber's side. His assistant squad leader, Sgt. Harland Lee, was wounded by a bullet in the neck a few seconds later. But Leary, a 37-year-old Iowan who had declined several opportunities to attend Officer Candidate School in the States, took up the slack with an inspiring example of calmness and quiet confidence. During the hand-to-hand fighting, Leary located a machine gun which had caused many of the platoon's casualties. Moving forward alone, Leary charged the position. Nearby grenade explosions failed to deter him and he finally disposed of the crew with M-1 fire delivered from point-blank range. As he turned to relay orders to his platoon, another Nambu turned on him and brought him down with a burst through the chest.

Now the issue was clouded. For a moment panic threatened as no one stepped forward to succeed Leary, later posthumously awarded a

DSC. Order was restored when Lt. Samuel B. Harbison left his Weapons Platoon—held in the rear in general support—and took charge of the shattered assault unit. Cajoling, threatening and encouraging in turn, Lieutenant Harbison, an Oregon attorney in civilian life, collected the platoon and closed in on the machine-gun positions for the second time. Cavender strengthened this move by committing another rifle platoon to the action. At this point, however, hitherto silent Nips on the crest of Question Mark made their presence felt by lobbing mortar shells over the heads of Item Company into Able's ranks. When Cavender saw several men go down under this barrage, he realized that present tactics would avail him nothing.

Despite the danger to friendly forces from the use of artillery, the Company A commander felt that the howitzers, if properly adjusted on the multitude of targets, could rapidly turn the tide of the engagement. He radioed the fire direction center and asked the artillery to undertake the fire mission. Company A disengaged itself from the enemy and withdrew to covered positions while Kennedy was notified to have his men lay flat in their foxholes. The first rounds were on the way in a few minutes. Painstaking computation of firing data brought them to within a few yards of the designated area. Cavender took the responsibility of fire adjustment and slowly walked the rounds onto the enemy line.

Upon cessation of these fires, the company resumed its advance. Again machine guns greeted the unit as it stepped from behind its cover, but now the fires were not so effective. With three platoons on line, the company finally broke through the Japanese cordon after an afternoon-long fight. It was 1700 when Cavender's men converged on the Item perimeter. A pitiful sight greeted them there. Several men were delirious from thirty-six hours without water. Others lay unconscious in their holes. The Engineer carrying party came up in a few minutes and gave Item all the water it could drink. Kennedy then received notice to return to the battalion CP. Another smoke screen was laid down to conceal movement and the company and Engineers managed to effect their withdrawal without suffering additional casualties. At the smaller perimeter Item paused to collect its litter cases, leaving the dead on the scene until the ground was secured and they could be properly removed and interred.

Among the dead was T/Sgt. Charles L. Whitlock, a platoon sergeant who had served with the 130th Infantry since it was first federalized. Whitlock had sacrificed his life the day before in a gallant attempt to carry his platoon over the summit of Question Mark. Far in front





*Technical Sergeant Charles L. Whitlock*

of his closest squad, this Mount Vernon (Illinois) noncom knocked out two machine guns with rifle fire and grenades before a Jap in a covered emplacement raised a grass-covered trapdoor and brought Whitlock down from the rear. One of the wounded, Sergeant Joseph O. Emery, accounted for another machine gun in the same action. Emery, then an automatic rifleman, rose from the ground when his squad was pinned down by a Nambu and slaughtered the crew with several bursts of fire. As he was wiping out the emplacement a Nip grenade exploded a few feet away, maiming his right arm.

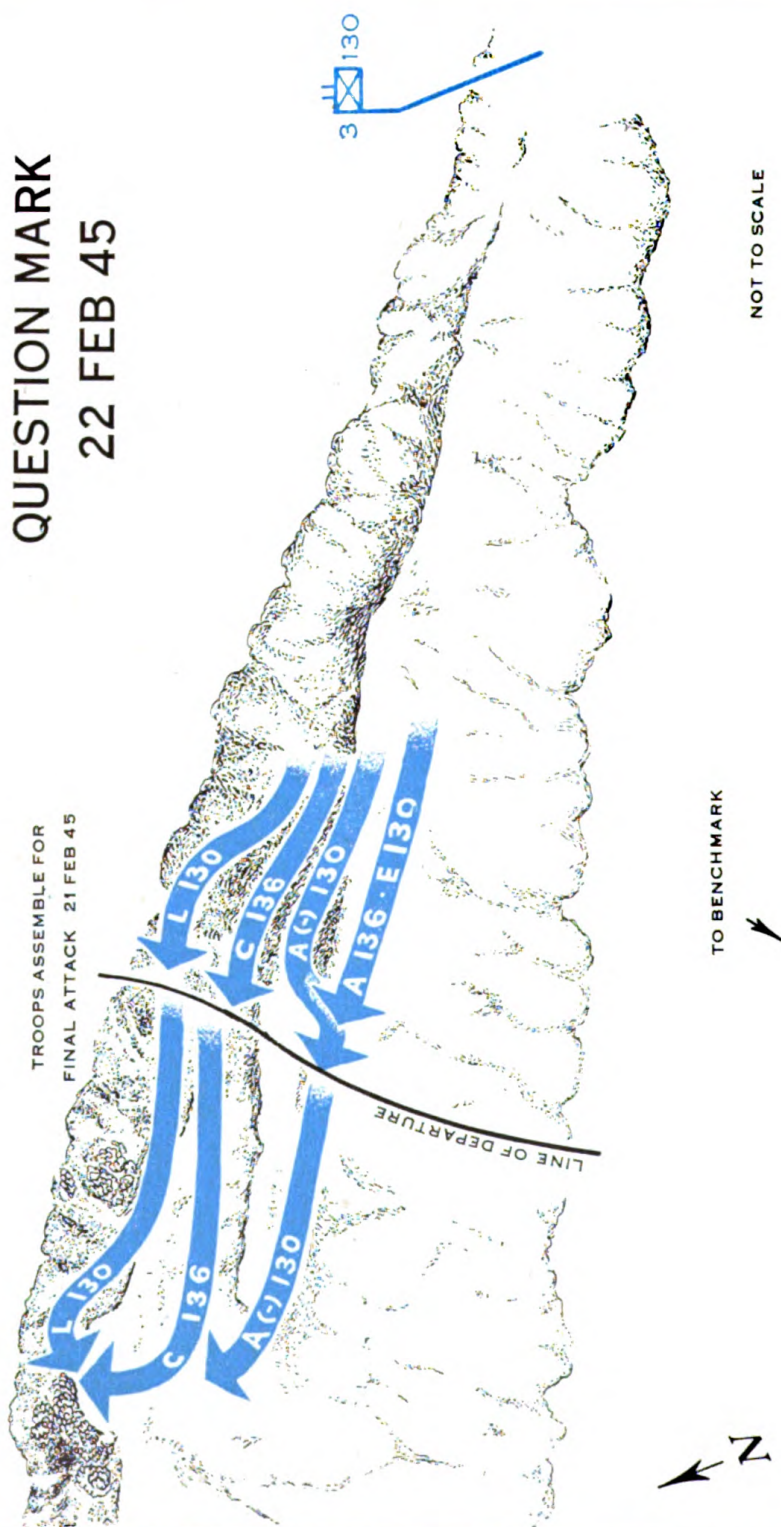
Sergeant Emery—an Illinois Guardsman like Whitlock—quickly squatted and slid the heavy rifle across his knees. Actuating the weapon with his left hand, he continued to place effective fire on the strong-point. Later when Company I began to dig in, Emery noticed a wounded doughboy lying in the fire-swept area outside of the perimeter. He raced forward through Jap machine-gun fire, grabbed the casualty by the leg and commenced to drag him to safety. When he was five yards away from his comrades, Emery suddenly released his hold on the wounded man and slumped forward unconscious. Other doughs quickly pulled the two inert men into the perimeter. Sergeant Whitlock joined Kimball, Finn and Leary as posthumous recipients of the DSC, while Emery and Sergeant Pavlick of Company K became the only living men to earn the award in the Question Mark–Bench Mark battle.

By midnight of 20 February General Myers, Colonel Collins and Lt. Colonel Minton were able to start planning for an attack that would result in the seizure of both Bench Mark and Question Mark. Many difficulties still remained to be hurdled, but Item's relief and Company A's tactical success had resolved several problems. On Bench Mark the situation likewise had improved. By dusk, Captain Hicks and Company K held all of the summit and reverse slope with the exception of Hooker and Dead Man's Hills.

As the first move in assuming positions for an all-out blow against Question Mark, Company L was told to abandon its positions adjacent to Bench Mark and return to the 3d Battalion CP. At the same time Company C, 136th Infantry, was ordered out of Division reserve and instructed to join Company A. Both moves were made at night, not only to escape Japanese detection, but also to avoid the intense heat of day which was keeping pace with the enemy in inflicting casualties. Lieutenant Angulo rested Company L at the CP for several hours before continuing on to Question Mark.

Capt. Clifford E. Fox, in command of Charley Company, made the

# THE FALL OF QUESTION MARK 22 FEB 45



Map 10

long trek from Sison to Able Company with no prolonged halts. At 0400 on 21 February the three companies were entrenched on the slope of the objective. Coincident with their arrival, a supply and evacuation route was secured. Working around the clock, a detachment from Company B, 108th Engineer Combat Battalion, had completed a bulldozed jeep trail which stretched from the base of Bench Mark Hill to the rim of the draw separating Bench Mark and Question Mark. Now, supply and medical evacuation would be able to function at their normal pace.

Ground commanders were able to formulate final plans since all barriers between friendly forces and the enemy had been stripped away. Lieutenant Colonel Minton recommended that the attack take place the following morning, 22 February, at dawn. General Myers and Colonel Collins, using the battalion forward CP—on top of Bench Mark—as headquarters, concurred. As soon as company commanders had checked in at the CP on 21 February with reports of recent happenings, the plan of attack was completed. It called for Company A, 130th Infantry (newly arrived in the sector), Company L, 130th Infantry, and Company C, 136th Infantry, to attack abreast in an assault wave. Elements of Company E, 130th Infantry, and Company A, 136th Infantry, were to constitute the reserve.

In an arrangement aimed at lending more power to the attack, all machine guns belonging to the force were to be massed on Bench Mark's crest under battalion control. Captain Wallace was designated on-the-ground commander of the crew-served pieces. Three battalions of artillery, the 123d, 124th and 210th, were assigned firing positions. Of all Division Artillery, only the 122d Field Artillery Battalion—on the Division left flank with the 123d Infantry—was not in position to back the attack.

Infantry activity was restricted to a minimum throughout the day preceding the final thrust. Not so with the artillery. Because of the large number of troops massed on the slopes of Question Mark, utmost care was essential in registering concentrations. To lessen the chance of injury to friendly forces, each howitzer was separately adjusted by artillery plane on its part of the target. By nightfall, the last gun had completed its adjustment and all was in readiness. The sole enemy response to these obvious preparations was limited to occasional mortar and machine-gun fire. No casualties were sustained.

Washington's Birthday of 1945 broke hot and clear. Massed machine guns on Bench Mark, twenty-four 105mm and twelve 155mm howitzers thundered their fires against the objective at precisely 0650. For the

next ten minutes Question Mark Hill was an inferno, buried under a maze of flame, dust and smoke. To the left-rear, prone doughs could see thousands of tracers race across the draw and rebound into the sky after striking the hilltop. So powerful was the relentless stream of high explosives that it seemed as though the summit would be literally blasted from the face of the earth. At 0700 a smoke shell landed on the center of Question Mark. This was the prearranged signal to the infantryman that the show had passed on to him.

Like a tremendous green-clad wave the three rifle companies leaped forward and rolled up the hillside, destroying everything to their front in a single mighty surge. Opposition was nil. The artillery had done a superb job. The enemy, trying to regain his equilibrium after the tremendous barrage, could do nothing to stem the savage onslaught. Grenades poured into each emplacement, M-1s cut down shocked Nips who staggered across the hilltop, and flamethrowers turned their caves into blazing furnaces. It was literally a slaughter. In exactly thirty-two minutes from the time the smoke shell landed, the only men on Question Mark were grim, satisfied doughs. Not a Nip was seen to move off the hill alive, not a prisoner was taken.

It was now a simple matter to engage the enemy still holding Dead Man's and Hooker Hills. Company K moved down the slope of Bench Mark in the wake of heavy fires from Question Mark and swarmed over the ground it had fought so bitterly to secure. In a few minutes, the assault on the hills was over. But troops of the Division learned one lasting combat lesson in the fight for the two hills: real estate came high on Luzon. For the 460 Japanese slain in the four-day engagement the 130th and 136th Infantry Regiments traded 33 killed, 2 men missing in action and 82 wounded.



## Chapter 8: Initial Actions of the 123d

SQUARING off against the Jap provided no novel experience for Colonel Serff's troops. While not hardened campaigners in any sense of the words, his foot-sloggers had seen enough of the enemy in the slime of the Maffin Bay bush to appreciate the blind courage and cunning which were a major part of the Nip's combat equipment. Trepidation naturally accompanied the 123d doughboys into the line on 13 February. However, a wide vein of confidence was also apparent during the regiment's relief of the 158th RCT on high ground north of the Damortis-Rosario road. This *esprit* stemmed from one factor: the unit had yet to record its first tactical failure.

Fate was kind to the 123d Infantry for several days after it was first committed in Luzon. Its sector was all but inactive compared to those of other Division elements. Southeast of Rosario Colonel Collins' force, working out of Cauringan, was thrown against a vital strong-point a few hours after it took its place in the Division line. South of the 130th Infantry, Colonel Cavenee's regiment had the nasty task of clearing a pocket of Nips who constituted a threat to the Division right flank at Pozorrubio. In both instances the enemy struck back with everything at his disposal. Casualties ran high from 15 to 22 February.

Despite the absence of heavy fighting along its line, the 123d was weighted with responsibilities surpassing those of the other regiments. Its sector was easily the most vulnerable in the Division zone of action. The coastal road, running to Damortis from the north, afforded the enemy an excellent avenue of approach in the event he decided to stage a counterattack. If successfully executed such a move could conceivably result in a large Jap wedge through the Division-Army line, currently stretching from Damortis back to Manila. Forced to stand fast until enemy intentions were discernible, the 123d contented itself with aggressive patrolling to its front.

Division G-2 and G-3 exhibited an acute interest in the terrain confronting the regiment. Ever since the Division became operational on Luzon it had received numerous unconfirmed reports from guerrillas and mountain tribesmen describing an abandoned, rough-hewn road which originated in the 123d sector and wound through the Caraballo Mountains to the shadows of Baguio. More specifically, this route began at Pugo, a small town ten miles north of Rosario, and ended at Tuba, a minute settlement a few miles southwest of the summer capital. Maps of the area gave no indication that such a road ever existed. However, should the trailway prove a reality instead of

a legend, it could possibly solve the chief enigma currently challenging Division planners: namely, choice of the most rapid passage toward Baguio. A Pugo-Tuba line of advance to the summer capital would certainly be considerably shorter than any other eligible possibility. True, Kennon Road with its two-lane concrete pavement represented the fastest route, but the Japanese had already eliminated it from serious consideration.

Emphasis was placed on interrogation of Pugo residents, and their revelations caused headquarters' hopes to soar. Each additional interview seemed to buttress the legend of the trail. Some Filipinos swore that they'd journeyed over it many times; others offered to trace it on maps. They claimed it was well known throughout the Caraballos as the Old Spanish Trail. Faced with seemingly incontrovertible evidences that a Pugo-Tuba route was more than a native myth, Division prepared to capitalize upon its possibilities. General Clarkson and members of his staff decided to mount one arm of the projected three-way pincer on Baguio from a Pugo base.

Before the operation could emerge from the planning stage however, Division needed detailed information on the roads and trail nets leading to and from Pugo. While the regiment had patrolled ceaselessly from the time it was committed on the Damortis-Rosario line, no parties had made a particularly deep penetration in the direction of Pugo. Equally imperative for tactical success was the selection and reconnaissance of a route by which the 123d Infantry could advance north and form a Pugo line. It was essential that the enemy remain unaware of regimental intentions; otherwise, little surprise could be achieved when the time came to launch a drive through the hills.

Baker Company, commanded by Capt. James J. Itule, got the job of patrolling through Pugo and tracing a concealed route to the *barrio* which could be used by elements of the regiment leaving the Damortis-Rosario line. Nominated for the task on Division order, the company was alerted for the five-day-long mission on 16 February. Its projected route ran north from Rosario to Pugo, then east through Tubao to Agoo on the coastal highway, and finally south to Colonel Serff's CP at Damortis. Company B left Rosario at dawn on the 18th.

On 23 February, while Itule and his troops were still circumventing regimental positions, Division gave the 123d Infantry its first combat mission calling for the coordinated action of an entire battalion. Lt. Colonel Coates' 1st Battalion, less Company B, was ordered to pull out of the Rosario sector and drive along the high ground bordering Kennon Road toward a peculiar terrain feature called Twin Peaks.

The battalion was to eliminate any groups of Japanese along the route of advance and then assault and secure Twin Peaks.

Missions of the other battalions were not altered because of the transfer of the 1st Battalion. Major Wolff's 3d Battalion, on the regimental flank at Damortis, continued to scout out the coastal plain as far as Agoo while the Reconnaissance Troop—also operating out of Damortis—shot motorized patrols to the shadows of Aringay. Attached guerrillas and the 2d Battalion extended its lines to include the ground formerly held by Lt. Colonel Coates' force. Combat patrolling of the high ground to its front remained the battalion mission.

A few hours before the 1st Battalion was due to begin its advance toward Twin Peaks, Baker Company returned from its five-day patrol. Captain Itule's report to Colonel Serff was in the main discouraging. First of all, Itule announced that he could find no trace of the Old Spanish Trail in the vicinity of Pugo. Also, he informed his regimental commander that any straight-line advance from Rosario to Pugo could not be made without arousing enemy suspicions. The terrain was such that supply trains, artillery, and attached armor would be forced to follow a narrow road which cut through a broad, open valley. Hostile observation and harassment appeared inevitable.

On the bright side, however, Baker Company brought back detailed reports on enemy strength between Pugo and the Damortis-Rosario line. According to Captain Itule, organized Nip defenses consisted solely of a string of observation posts and a scanty outpost line facing the 123d Infantry front. At no points covered by the patrol was the enemy known to be holed up in tremendous numbers. Despite its disappointment at the lack of information on the Old Spanish Trail, regiment took comfort from the fact that it would be able to proceed virtually unimpeded once it was told to advance.

Division accepted Itule's recommendation on the futility of a direct move from Rosario to Pugo. On the other hand, its faith in Pugo as a base of operations was not shaken because of the patrol's inability to locate the Pugo-Tuba trail. Major Cregg's battalion received orders to push deeper through the hills on its reconnaissances to the north. It was told that a general advance on Pugo would take place upon completion of this preparatory phase.

Meanwhile, the 1st Battalion—less Company B which was resting at Rosario—struck out for Twin Peaks. Leaving the regimental line on the 24th, it headed toward its objective across country, using the forbidding Kennon Road as a guide. Able Company, commanded by Capt. Harry L. Ice, Jr., advanced along a 2,500-foot-high wooded ridge-

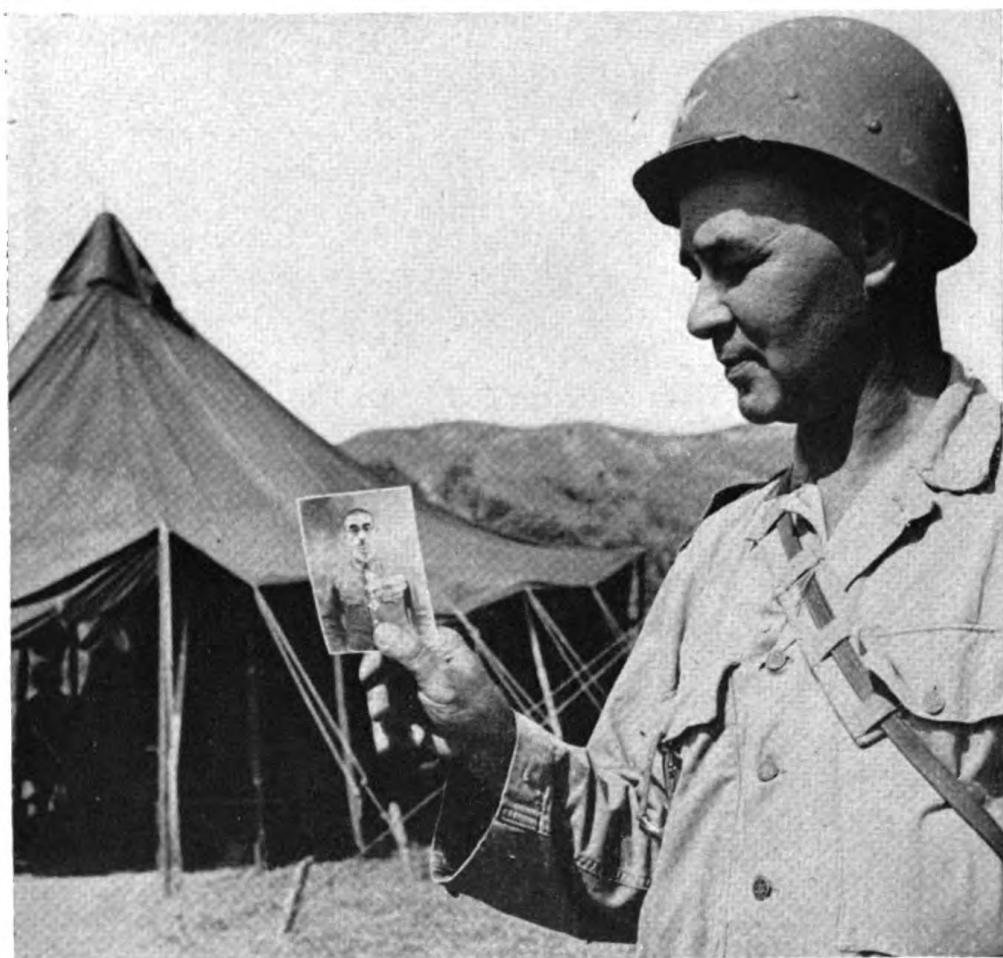
line which ran parallel to the north side of the road some 1,300 yards away. To the left of Company A and separated from it by a gully, moved Charley Company, headed by Capt. Vernon G. Rexroat. Visual contact was possible by day and both forces were able to advance abreast. Howitzers from Lt. Colonel Carlson's 122d Field Artillery Battalion stood ready to render supporting 105mm fires.

The companies encountered scattered opposition during the second day of advance. Small groups of Japanese, doubtless posted as Kennon Road watchdogs, literally infested both A and C Companies' ridges. Luckily, these units acted independently and made no attempt to join into a single, strong band. Invariably they were wiped out by 1st Battalion forces, their only accomplishment being to stall the advance momentarily. Twin Peaks was sighted on the last day of February. It came by its name honestly. Two towering hills swept up from the ridgelines for hundreds of feet, dwarfing the surrounding mountains which lay heaped against their slopes. A gauzy cloud-film hung over both summits while the powerful rays of the sun produced a grayish-brown hue on the hillsides.

However, scenic splendor had long ceased to fascinate A and C Companies' hill-weary riflemen. They regarded Twin Peaks apprehensively, their eyes searching out defiles and approaches in place of spectacular formations of rocks and flora. Ice and Rexroat received orders from Lt. Colonel Coates' CP directing them to advance within five hundred yards of the peaks, dig in for the night, and reconnoiter the objective the following morning. Each company entered its own separate operation at this point with A Company detailed to hit the right hill and C the left. Both were incapable of mutual support by reason of the deep ravine which cut between their ridgelines and continued on to sever Twin Peaks.

A reinforced platoon of Company A, led by Lt. Lloyd M. Bernard, Ice's executive officer, went out on reconnaissance shortly after dawn on 1 March. Bernard had a twofold mission. One was to locate a convenient approach to the summit, where the Japanese were known to be emplaced in large numbers. The other was to seek out the Nip strongpoint and punch at it from several different angles with a view to picking out its weakest links. Backed up by a profusion of BARs and tommy guns, Bernard's group cleared the perimeter without incident and set out on a direct line toward A Company's hill.

Lieutenant Bernard received a cruel rebuff as he neared the end of his ridgeline. From the company perimeter it appeared as though the ridge ran right to the side of Twin Peaks and then up the hill in an



*Colonel Serff holds a photograph of the Jap commander opposing him along the Rosario-Damortis line*

unbroken line. Bernard now saw that his route of advance dropped off sharply to the base of his objective. A visual reconnaissance showed him that one half of Twin Peaks was circled by the deep draw which cut off the objective as effectively as a moat surrounding a medieval castle. Disgust was universal within the platoon. It meant more hours of climbing for gaunt, nearly exhausted troops; more opportunity for the enemy to diagnose their move and intercept them.

Bernard had no choice but to mutter a word of encouragement and lead the advance into the draw. Stealth was practically impossible as the doughs fought to maintain their balance on the almost perpendicular ridge side. Finally, the entire platoon emerged into the bottom of the ravine where they rested for a moment and reorganized before attacking the rugged climb ahead. After this brief respite, they slung their gear, posted security in the form of automatic riflemen to both flanks and began the ascent. Scouts were handicapped by the terrain



and could see no more than a few yards uphill before patches of tall *kunai* grass blotted out their fields of vision.

If ever the Nips held an advantage, that time was now. Bernard's force had little observation, no opportunity to pick out pitfalls on the mountainside where an ambush might be waiting. Every man's attention was necessarily devoted to staying on his feet and negotiating the climb. M-1s had to be carried over the shoulder so that hands were free to grasp shrubs and vines. At precisely this moment the enemy chose to lash out with fire. Before the scouts had a chance to shout a warning, a party of Japanese rose from the *kunai* and poured a fusillade of rifle fire into the platoon. Because of the sharp angle of the hill it was impossible to return this fire with any telling effect. Lieutenant Bernard sent his support squad out to the right flank in an attempt to swing around this barrier and blast it from the side, but the enemy saw this move and ground it down in short order. The platoon backed down the slope and tried to come in from the left side, but this too proved unsuccessful. Bernard remained in this position until late afternoon when he withdrew his men and returned to the company perimeter.

Captain Rexroat's company, closing in on the left peak, had no better luck. His troops also were forced to dip to the base of the draw before they could find an approach to the objective. Like the Able force they were beaten off the hillside before they could make much headway.

A second try at fighting up to the top of the peaks was inaugurated by both companies shortly after sunrise the following day. Again Ice and Rexroat entrusted their missions to single rifle platoons heavily reinforced with automatic weapons. Company A's force, led on this attempt by Lieutenant Raymond E. Bailey, was ordered to shy away from the sector explored by Bernard and work over another route. Bailey was forced to descend into the thickly vegetated gully surrounding the foot of his target, but once at the bottom he half-circled the hill and approached it from its northern side.

His platoon had not covered more than a hundred yards before its advance was interrupted by short-range Nip fires coming from the left and right fronts. The platoon got its BARs into action but when riflemen tried to move forward they were picked off by enemy Arisakas. Several Japanese were killed in the close contact fire-fight, but others concealed in mutually supporting bunkers took up the slack and kept the line from cracking. Bailey's men were the aggressors throughout the day but darkness finally stopped them. The platoon, bearing its

dead and wounded, hiked back to its base. Charley Company, employing identical tactics on the left side of the dual objective, suffered a similar setback. Battalion was disturbed at reports from A and C but knew of no way to take Twin Peaks other than to ceaselessly pound the enemy strongpoints. Lt. Colonel Coates ordered Ice and Rexroat to resume the pressure at daybreak.

After two fruitless tries, every dough in the 1st Battalion prayed that No. 3 would bear a lucky charm. It almost did. Still employing a single reinforced rifle platoon to insure prompt maneuverability, Captain Ice sent his 3d Platoon out under the command of Lt. William B. Roop, Able's Weapons Platoon leader. Lieutenant Roop left the company perimeter while the sun still struggled to pierce the haze covering the ridgeline. The approach march was made rapidly and the platoon dropped down into the draw and began its advance up the right peak before the terrain was sharply lighted. Moving stealthily but as quickly as the ground would permit, the force knifed upward without arousing the Nip outposts.

Where the riflemen making the two previous attempts had barely cleared the gully before receiving heavy small-arms fire, Roop's men somehow managed to evade the enemy sentries. Their speed and silence paid off handsomely. Now well up on the side of the peak, lead scouts suddenly raised their rifles horizontally overhead and dropped to the ground. Roop crawled forward to investigate and saw a sprawling banana grove cut into the hillside. Jap conversation could be heard. The platoon leader summoned his second-in-command, T/Sgt. Alfred W. Johnson, and outlined a plan whereby one squad would work around to the right and bear in on the enemy while the remaining elements rushed the grove from the front.

At Lieutenant Roop's signal the assault was on. BARs and M-1s crackled as the doughs swept forward. A dozen Japs fell before the fire as the platoon completed its sprint through the clearing. Security went out to the front and both flanks as the troops were reorganized to defend the ground. A bulky Nip radio emplaced in a foxhole was destroyed by a grenade. However, the Japanese were now thoroughly aroused. They reacted immediately, dispatching strong investigating forces from positions on the crest of the objective. Able's single platoon was soon spotted and the Nips quickly inaugurated a double envelopment behind knee-mortar support that threatened to crush the American unit. Roop realized that his command lacked the numbers and guns to stem the oncoming Nip tide. He radioed the 122d Field Artillery fire direction center and asked for 105mm fire to blanket the

grove and cover his withdrawal. No further casualties were sustained during the move down into the ravine.

Now the battalion was in bad shape. Three solid days of action plus fever and fatigue combined to rob the two companies of a major part of their combat strength. Tortuous hill-climbing left the rest of the outfit tired and listless. Luzon's mountains were something new to these riflemen who had trained to fight in sand and jungle: it took weeks to condition one's self to the rigors of hill campaigning. But Lt. Colonel Coates still had one card left to play. Gambling on an all-or-nothing basis involving both of his assault teams, he alerted A and C for a coordinated two-company strike to take place the following morning. Batteries of guns from the light 122d and medium 123d Field Artillery Battalions registered in at dusk to assure sufficient fire support. Chemical mortars from the attached 98th Chemical Mortar Battalion were ready to back the attack.

Promptly at dawn the 4.2s shrouded all of Twin Peaks in a pall of white phosphorus smoke. Artillery thundered against the enemy-held slopes, pausing only to elevate their fires as the doughboys came closer to the impact areas. Advancing in columns of platoons, A and C disappeared into their respective draws and went into the attack. Lieutenant Roop, familiar with the terrain as far as the banana grove, moved with the Able spearhead and guided the force toward the clearing. Meanwhile Company C succeeded in skirting several Nip strongpoints on the left side and managed to move at the same speed as Ice's force.

Once past the grove the axe fell on Company A. Confronting it was a strong, albeit hastily constructed, line manned by scores of Nip infantrymen. Platoons gamely tried to shoulder their way through the center of the line. When that failed, pressure was shunted out to the flanks. But the Jap stayed powerful at all points. At his CP Captain Ice could hear a sudden outburst of high-pitched Nambus coming from the left peak where Charley Company had bumped into the heart of the Japanese defense. Furious fighting went on all day but the situation did not change. Back at battalion Lt. Colonel Coates got a mournful "We're stopped" from each of his company commanders. When it appeared inevitable that continued punching would reap no dividends the battalion CO ordered his forces to hold what had been gained and await further orders.

Three consecutive reverses made it painfully evident that the Nips on Twin Peaks had a line of resistance powerful enough to withstand the attack of an entire battalion. With no trump cards left, Lt. Colonel Coates' sole alternative was to drop back and wait while air and artil-

lery assumed the task of applying pressure to the hills. Then, once Napalm and high explosives had dissipated the Jap's cover, depleted his ground reserves, and shattered his indisputable advantage of terrain, 1st Battalion troops with Baker Company now available, could again move forward to apply the crusher.

Just prior to dusk on 3 March, as Coates was readying his recommendations for the approval of higher headquarters, his radio operator received a priority message requesting the battalion commander to report to the regimental CP at Damortis without delay. When the tall Peorian strode into the operations office he was surprised to see all battalion commanders, the entire regimental staff, and Colonel Serff grouped around a large-scale wall map. Seeing Coates, Colonel Serff looked up and curtly announced: "The 123d Infantry has been alerted to drive northward. All battalions will be needed in this show so ready your outfit for relief as soon as you return to your CP. Major Askren's 2d Battalion, 130th Infantry, will take over the Twin Peaks job tomorrow at noon. As soon as his force is in position take your battalion to these coordinates, an assembly area north of San Luis. You'll pick up Company B there. S-3 will fill you in on happenings of the past week and handle your questions. Last stop on this line is Baguio."

Much had occurred on the Rosario-Damortis line while the 1st Battalion was fighting in Kennon Road country. Major Cregg had received a change of assignment and went from 2d Battalion CO to regimental S-3, a post he had held throughout the regiment's training. Lt. Col. James W. Hilton, no stranger to the 33d Division, had meanwhile been assigned to the 123d and given Cregg's old command. Lt. Colonel Hilton had gone through World War I with the Golden Cross, earning the British Military Medal and the Silver Star for gallantry in action in France. Again a member of a fighting unit, he held the distinction of being the only 33d Division man to actively campaign in both wars with the same unit.

During a recess in the conference, Major Cregg thoroughly oriented Lt. Colonel Coates on the overall tactical situation. Briefly summed up, this was it: Constant combat reconnaissance had finally disintegrated the enemy outpost line overlooking regimental installations between Damortis and Rosario. Higher headquarters persisted in maintaining a check rein on the regiment but permitted Colonel Serff to pull stakes from the Rosario-Damortis road and build positions along the series of ridges formerly manned by the Japanese. In the main, 2d Battalion troops and guerrillas held these points. On the right



Hill Y



flank of the 123d's zone of action, Major Wolff's 3d Battalion and the Reconnaissance Troop—coordinating with the doughboys—had swept along the coastal highway to Agoo. Enemy opposition, fierce in some cases, was usually scattered and ineffective.

However, gradual liquidation of these Nip groups had readied the regiment for its northward advance. Patrol reports, mostly from Itule's five-day reconnaissance and from Lt. James M. Garrity's I&R Platoon, had soundly established the fact that the bulk of Japanese defenses was centered in the mountains northeast of Pugo. Everything south of the deserted *barrio* reputedly consisted of observation post personnel and nuisance forces pushed out from the enemy's main line of resistance to hinder and harass invading troops. Pugo was the 123d's current aiming point. Division had made the decision to take the town and employ it as the regiment's base of operations for a Baguio drive. It was hoped that once all elements of the regiment converged on Pugo the legend of the Old Spanish Trail would rapidly be substantiated. If it were finally proven that the trail was a myth, the 123d Infantry would blaze its own trail and fight through to the summer capital.

Before the capture of Pugo could be effected, Colonel Serff first had to comb out and clear a huge tract of low, rolling hills which sprawled between Pugo and the ridges held by the regiment. It was impossible to ignore this preliminary. Not only would an open back door invite hostile ground action, but more important, the Japanese would have an unimpeded view of all regimental moves out of Pugo and be able to communicate them to the main Nip force holed up north of the *barrio*. Two hills in particular stood out as definite threats to regimental security. One, called Y, was located on the eastern fringe of the 123d's sector, approximately a mile and a half north of San Luis. The other, named X—the unknown quantity—rose on the opposite side of the regimental zone of action some two miles east of Tubao.

Standing only five hundred feet high, both X and Y were admirably suited to serve as observation posts. From Y's crest, the approaches into Pugo and the ridges currently housing the regiment were clearly visible. Observers on Hill X could easily view any strike toward Pugo made by way of the coastal highway and then relay pertinent data on strength and disposition of American troops to Nip headquarters. With this information, Japanese artillerymen could conceivably block off the regimental advance.

Once his subordinate commanders had received complete intelligence and operations briefings, Colonel Serff was ready to go into his plan of attack. Hills X and Y were first on the combat agenda. Once these

hills had been seized and the regiment's rear sealed off from enemy view, the drive would swing toward Pugo. Although earlier reconnaissance had made it plain that no strong enemy force held the area of low hills, the capture of X and Y posed a delicate tactical problem. It was inadvisable for the 123d Infantry to bear down on X and Y from their present positions. While such a move would have had local success, its futility would become apparent several days later when the regiment encountered an alerted and aroused enemy at Pugo and the mountains beyond. A quick surprise thrust into the Nip's open flanks was the only logical answer.

Colonel Serff outlined exactly such a move. His plan called for all companies of the 1st Battalion to be thrown against Hill Y. Lt. Colonel Coates received orders to quit Kennon Road at night and move to San Luis under cover of darkness. Once there, the battalion was to go into bivouac until the early morning hours of 7 March when the approach march on the hill would begin. Hill Y was to be hit at dawn. X became a joint 2d and 3d Battalion objective. Lt. Colonel Hilton's men were to abandon their ridge positions on the night of 6 March and backtrack to the Rosario-Damortis road to await trucks which would take the battalion across to Damortis, up the coastal road to Agoo, and then along the Agoo-Tubao road to its terminus. Major Wolff's force, operating behind the 2d Battalion, was to follow the same route to Tubao except that it was to pick up its 2½-ton trucks on the highway north of Damortis. Upon detrucking, both units were to close in on Hill X, reach its base at dawn, and then attack.

One important factor remained to be worked out before preparations could be completed. The Agoo-Tubao road, necessary for the success of the operation, was still in Japanese hands. A narrow passage cut through a series of low ridges, the road was known to be heavily mined and defended by enemy units dug in on the overlooking hillsides. Unfortunately, unearthing mines and eliminating Jap defenders made up but half of the problem. The Agoo-Tubao road was dotted with almost a score of bridges which carried the road over numerous creeks and streams. Many of the spans had been totally destroyed while others had been so badly damaged that they could not bear combat vehicles.

Antitank Company, commanded by Capt. John D. Jones, and Company A, 108th Engineers, were jointly assigned the mission of clearing the pass of enemy and readying it for 2d and 3d Battalion traffic. Jones' company had been fighting as a rifle unit since it was first committed on Luzon. Like the other antitank units in the Division the terrain

had removed the potency from its 57mm guns. Rarely attached to a battalion, it fought out of regimental headquarters as Colonel Serff's select "trouble shooters."

With a mine-detecting team from the engineers leading the way, the push out of Agoo began on the morning of 4 March. Nip resistance was met as soon as the company cleared the *barrio* but the riflemen smothered it and kept moving. Directly behind the infantry came the engineer company, their vehicles laden with Bailey spans which had been dismantled from less pressing sites and rushed to this vital bottleneck. Once Antitank Company had gained the far end of a bridge, the engineers, tools and weapons in hand, came on to either strengthen the existing bridge or to sweep it aside and replace it with a Bailey span.

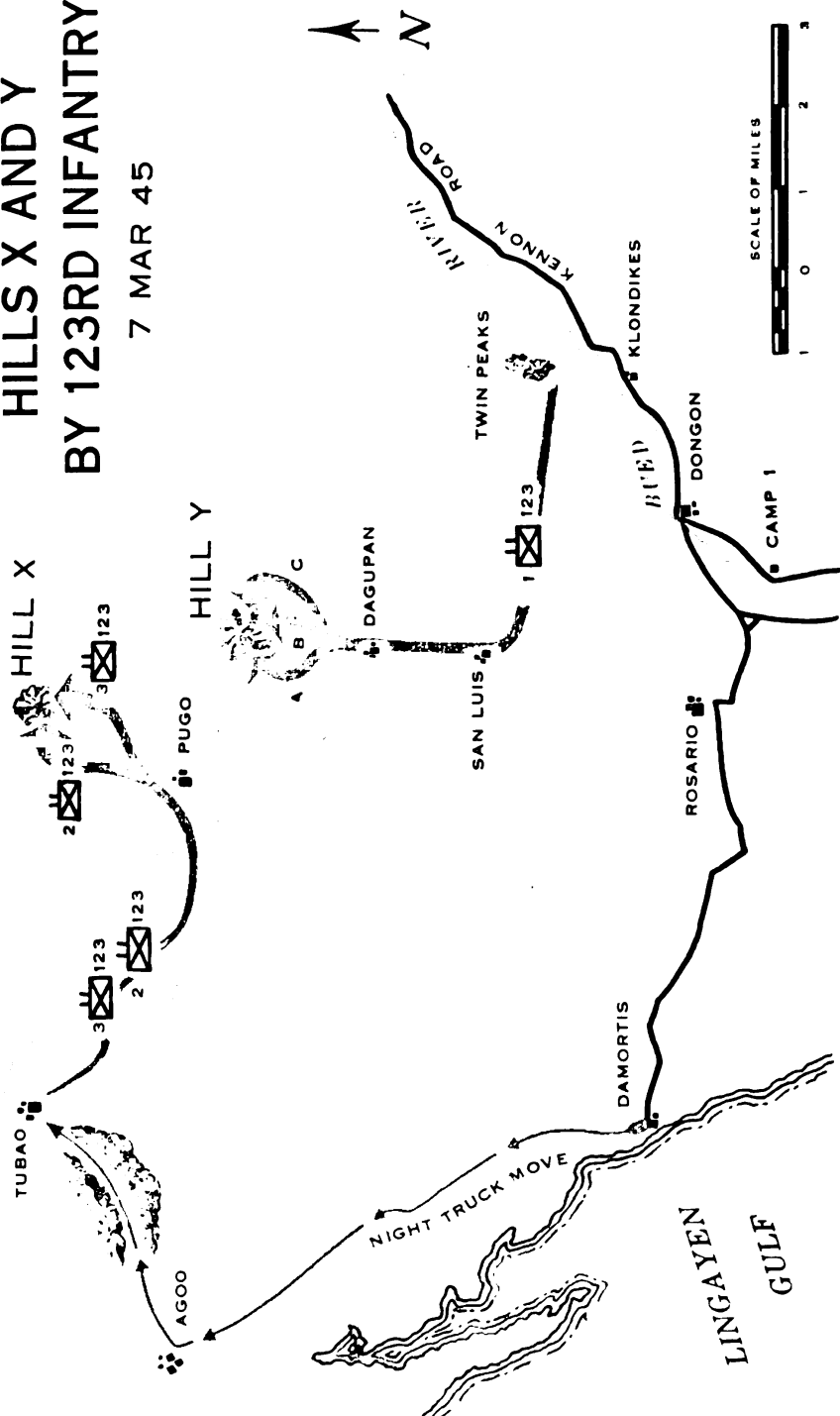
Sniper and machine-gun fire from the ridges inflicted many casualties but Antitank Company managed to overrun every organized Jap strong-point. Two days of close combat and steady repair of bridges finally brought the force to Tubao shortly before dark on 6 March. No more mines, no more ruined bridges and no more Nips remained to block 2d and 3d Battalion moves through the pass. Colonel Serff breathed a sigh of profound relief when he received Jones' message that the mission had been accomplished. He received the news only a few hours before his companies were scheduled to enter the pass.

Back in the 1st Battalion area near Kennon Road, Lt. Colonel Coates turned over the Twin Peaks puzzle to the 2d Battalion, 130th Infantry, and organized his force for the trek back to San Luis. One platoon of Baker Company and a wire-laying team from battalion headquarters moved out well in front of the column as an advance guard. The rest of Company B, now commanded by Lieutenant Bernard, led the main body with Able, Dog, Headquarters and Charley following in that order. It was close to midnight when the column finally began to move. Luckily, the moon provided enough illumination for the troops to pick out pitfalls in the terrain and there were no casualties from the night move. The cool of night made the steady pace bearable.

Bernard's advance guard came upon San Luis early the next morning. Normally inhabited by a few farming families, the village was completely deserted. Tall clumps of unruly tropical grass almost obscured the rundown *nipa* shacks from sight. Warily the platoon circled the *barrio* and closed in to search the few rickety huts. One squad, under Sgt. Roman L. Wesolowski, systematically probed them while other riflemen covered them from the rear. As Wesolowski led his men toward the last of the huts, grenades and machine-gun fire sud-

# ENVELOPMENT OF HILLS X AND Y BY 123RD INFANTRY

7 MAR 45



Map 11

denly swept out of one of the shrub-covered windows toward the squad and its covering group. Sergeant Wesolowski and his two scouts each caught grenade fragments.

Picking himself from the ground, Wesolowski ordered his squad to back up, form a firing line and pelt the shack with M-1 fire. Only after he was in position did Wesolowski notice that one of his scouts still lay close to the Japanese-held hut, unable to move due to his wounds. Disregarding the pain of his own injury, the sergeant rushed out through the fire, gathered the man up in his arms and raced back to the line. Minutes later, the platoon assaulted the hut and wiped out the five-man Japanese ambush. Sergeant Wesolowski later received the Silver Star for saving the life of his scout. After a short while, the rest of the battalion reached San Luis, reorganized, and marched a thousand yards northeast of the *barrio* where the companies halted and branched off into separate, hidden assembly areas. Lt. Colonel Coates notified Colonel Serff that his unit was in position for the attack.

Across the regimental zone, movement of troops did not begin until twelve hours before jumpoff time. Lt. Colonel Hilton and his men reached the Damortis-Rosario highway at the appointed time and entrucked for the ride to Tubao. Major Wolff's battalion arrived at Tubao close behind them. While the troops detrucked and reorganized, the two battalion commanders made a last-minute check of the coordinated plan. The 2d Battalion was to lead the approach march followed by the 3d. Several hundred yards short of the base of Hill X, the 3d Battalion was to branch off, move behind the hill and drive forward to the north. Lt. Colonel Hilton's doughboys were to stay on their original line and attack from the west. A platoon from Company G, led by Lt. Arthur B. Mathies, was selected to act as the advance guard.

Silence gripped the column as it moved through the night. All went according to plan. Minutes before dawn Major Wolff separated from the two-battalion column and curved his force around the southern slope of the hill. Only a single untoward incident occurred and that was smashed before it could do any damage. Observing a grass shack just to the right of his battalion's route, Lieutenant Mathies left his platoon and cut across to investigate. As he neared the shack three Nips inside opened up at him with point-blank rifle fire. Miraculously unhurt, Mathies whirled around and dove into a ditch a few feet away. Propping himself up on his elbows, he threw a clip of M-1 into the shack, heaved a grenade through a window and raced around to the opposite side of the hut, which he also grenaded. When he entered the shack all three of the enemy lay dead on the floor. Lieu-





*Attached tanks wait for the signal to close on Pugo*

tenant Mathies earned the first of his two awards of the Silver Star for this action.

At dawn the regiment moved into action all along the line. With Fox and George Companies in the lead, 2d Battalion troops swarmed up the side of Hill X at a dead run. No one paused for breath as the doughs swept over the ground at top speed, finally slowing down at the crest where they joined forces with 3d Battalion riflemen. Opposition was negligible. No more than a dozen Nips held the hill and they went down before the first blast of rifle fire. Things were scarcely different on the 1st Battalion objective. Able, Baker and Charley Companies took Hill Y without firing a shot.

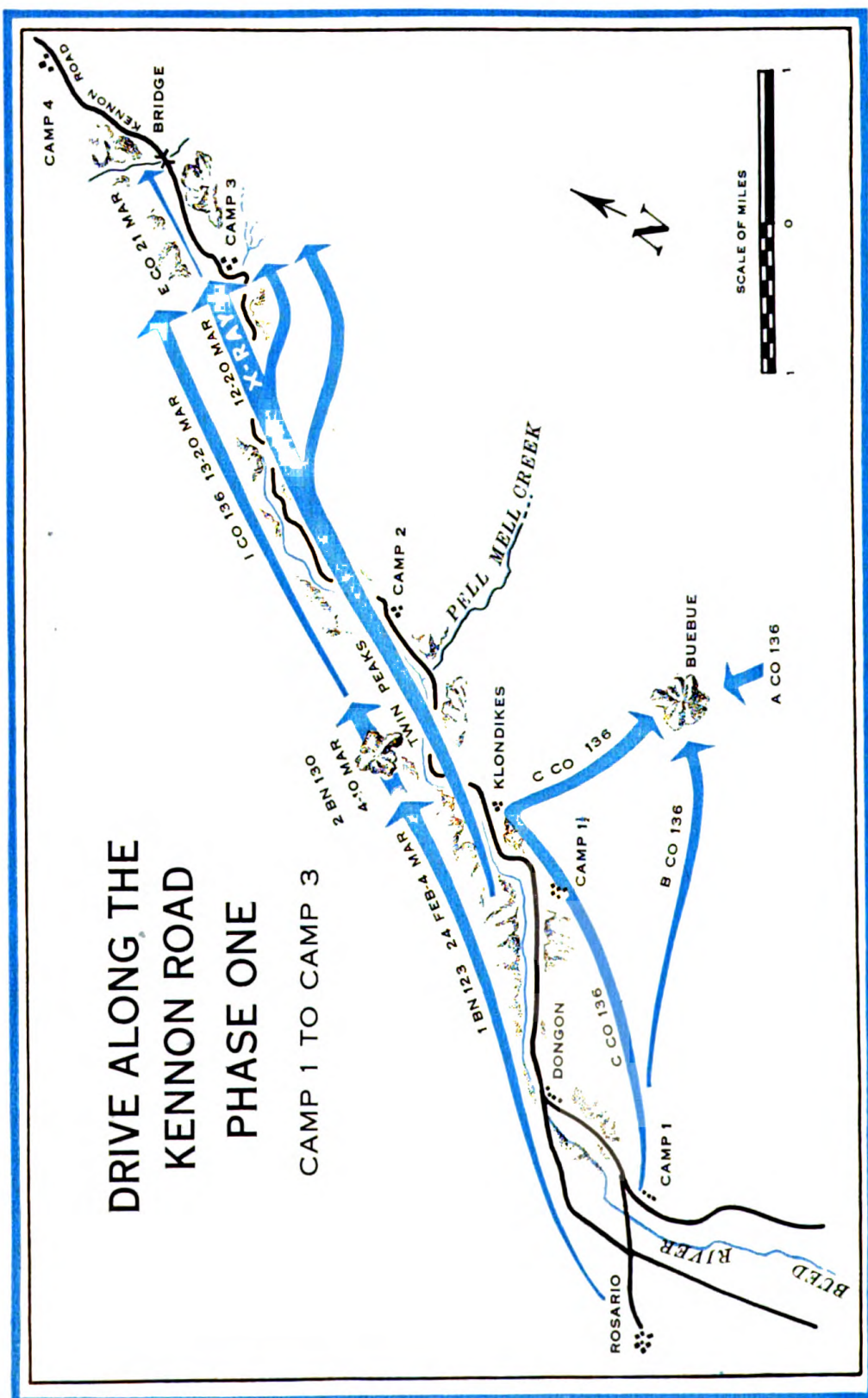
Meanwhile, from a vantage point between his two widely separated forces, Colonel Serff watched the perfectly executed double envelopment close in on X and Y. Shortly after completion of the regimental maneuver he was joined at his CP by Lieutenant Garrity and the I & R Platoon, just returned from a long-range patrol in the foothills north of Pugo. Garrity notified the colonel that Pugo was virtually clear, the bulk of enemy troops having withdrawn the day before. Armed with this information, the regimental commander decided to occupy Pugo without delay. He issued orders to the 2d and 3d Battalions directing them to leave Hill X and sweep through the ridges flanking Pugo on the west. Instruction went to Coates to comb out the terrain on the opposite side.

Colonel Serff then organized a composite force to attack through the valley between the flanking forces and effect the seizure of Pugo. The group was made up of regimental headquarters personnel, the I & R Platoon and a few medium tanks out of the 775th Tank Battalion, attached to the 123d for the X-Y envelopment. With Colonel Serff, in direct command of the makeshift unit, riding in one of the

point vehicles, "Task Force Pugo" moved out at noon. No enemy were met during the ride to Pugo but once inside the *barrio* the regimental commander's troops were fired upon by a small delaying force concealed inside a few flimsy huts. A sharp skirmish ensued during which twenty Japs were slain and three captured. However, once this initial resistance was crushed, remaining enemy broke for the safety of the mountains.

Pugo was quickly outposted from forces available while the regimental forward CP was set-up in the town's badly damaged church. Since landing on Luzon, the CP had found a rice paddy, a town hall, a brothel and now a church from which to direct 123d operations. Each battalion was contacted and informed that Pugo was in friendly hands. Commanders were told to advance until sundown and then construct a horseshoe-shaped perimeter around the newly captured *barrio*.

By dusk the rifle companies were in positions roughly a thousand yards north and northeast of Pugo. It took no grandiloquent orientation to tell the infantrymen what was in store for the immediate future. Ahead of them they could see a seemingly endless range of mountains with tree-covered peaks so high they seemed to be part of the heavens. They knew too that in days to come they would live and die on those peaks, fighting to rid them of enemy until Baguio—the pot of gold at the end of the rainbow—shone below the last hill.



Map 12

## Chapter 9: Action on Kennon Road

WITH the enemy still reeling from the blows inflicted by the Division in the Question Mark–Bench Mark Hill fights, General Clarkson pursued his advantage by directing that immediate steps be taken to clear existing enemy pockets from the chain of foothills south of Question Mark. Before any major effort could be exerted along forbidding Kennon Road it first became imperative to drive the Nips from their positions on the Division's right flank and rear. These Japanese, holed up on commanding ground, were capable of impeding supply and communication functions carried on from Division bases at Sison. With the Golden Cross gathering momentum for its northward push, it was vital that rear echelon bases be kept free from Japanese interference.

Numerous reconnaissance patrols, dispatched on Division order and manned by personnel of the 1st Battalion of the 130th Infantry, 2d Battalion of the 136th Infantry, and the 33d Cavalry Reconnaissance Troop, were pushed through the Labayug–Alibeng area with the mission of pinpointing each enemy pocket. Reports coming back to G-3 carried the desired information. The largest concentration of enemy troops occupied the crest of Hill 1802. The enemy garrison on 1802—a huge tree-covered mountain midway between Labayug and Alibeng—was estimated at a lone enemy rifle company reinforced by several light machine guns and mortars. Lesser Jap groups were reported on a chain of smaller hills leading into 1802.

As soon as G-3 had assimilated all patrol information and fitted it into a single picture, the battalions were committed to action. Lt. Colonel Jessup's outfit and the 2d Battalion, 136th Infantry, commanded by Lt. Colonel Haycock, received orders to liquidate the smaller enemy remnants by aggressive combat patrolling. Upon completion of this phase, designed to isolate the 1802 garrison, the joint effort would be turned against this strongpoint.

On 23 February, just one day after the end of the Question Mark battle, both battalions dispatched combat patrols which raked over the area surrounding 1802. For three days the rifle companies did nothing but tramp hills and root out die-hard Jap groups. The sun was hot, water was forever scarce, and the enemy, usually numbering fifteen or twenty to a band, bitterly contested every yard of advance. Gradually however, the Japanese holdouts were either annihilated or scattered, and by nightfall of 25 February Golden Cross doughs occupied all key terrain in the vicinity of the hill.

Colonel Cavenue, responsible for sweeping clean the Labayug–Alibeng area, decided to strike the Japs on 1802 without further delay.

He chose the 1st Battalion, 130th Infantry, attached to him for this operation, for the frontal assault against the Jap positions. While the Blackhawks were carrying out their strike, the plan called for Lt. Colonel Haycock's battalion to sweep through the countless ravines and gullies leading down from the hill. In this way, should the enemy decide to reinforce 1802, his routes of approach would be barred. By the same token, if the Jap attempted to fall back in the face of the attack, his avenues of withdrawal would be denied him.

Shortly before dusk on the afternoon of 26 February, Lt. Colonel Jessup led his men in an approach march up the slope of 1802. Enemy outposts were mysteriously missing and as the Blackhawks dug in several hundred yards below the crest, the Nips had no hint of an impending attack. When the men had completed their digging and had cleared fields of fire for their automatic weapons, the battalion commander grouped his company commanders and went over the plan of attack.

Because of the heavily wooded terrain, it was deemed advisable to have but one company make the assault. Baker Company, led by Kentucky-born Capt. James L. Brown, was picked for the effort. Following behind and prepared to swing out to the flanks in the event that Baker Company was unable to overrun the enemy positions were Able and Charley Companies, under Capts. James L. Mills and Patrick Kelly, respectively. Dog Company's mortars, located in a defiladed gully at the base of the hill, were to throw out a fifteen-minute HE barrage before the jumpoff. Capt. Billy Fleming, the weapons-company commander, acting as mortar observer, was to accompany Baker Company.

At 0845, Captain Fleming radioed his mortar positions to commence firing. In a few minutes rounds were symmetrically dotting the objective area. Baker Company inched forward to within 150 yards of the target while the mortars forced the enemy to seek cover underground. At 0900 the fires lifted and the company moved out in the attack. The enemy quickly shook off the effects of the high-explosive pounding and went into an active defense. Machine guns and light mortars ripped through the trees and tore up the ground in front of Captain Brown's men. Immediately the company spread out laterally and began to close in on the crest in a series of short rushes.

Fire and movement pulled the Blackhawks close to the Japanese line. On signal the doughs rose from the ground and ran over Nip troops and guns in a single surge. A short hand-to-hand fight followed, but every enemy attempt to stem the attack was crushed. Finally, after a



systematic destruction of each hole and gun position the hill was secured. Lt. Colonel Jessup radioed "Bart"—Colonel Cavenue—at 1227, less than three-and-a-half hours after jumpoff time, that 1802 had fallen.

Able and Charley Companies, in keeping with their assignments, swept in behind Baker Company and broke off into the deep ravines to mop up the few stragglers fortunate enough to pull off the crest. These would-be escapees were run down and shot as they fell into the tight vise clamped on them by Able and Charley from above and the 2d Battalion, 136th Infantry, covering escape routes from below. So complete was the enemy's defeat that it was possible to garrison Hill 1802 with one rifle platoon that night.

By 28 February patrols could gain no further contact with enemy forces in the 1802 area. In five days Lt. Colonel Jessup's force had accounted for 123 dead Japanese at a cost of twelve men killed in action. With its mission successfully completed, the battalion was released from attachment to the 136th Infantry and returned to its regiment at Rosario. Seeking to prevent the Nips from moving back into this zone, Colonel Cavenue kept Lt. Colonel Haycock's battalion, less Fox Company, in this sector for an additional ten days. By then Labayug-Alibeng was scoured clean and the enemy threat to the Division right flank dispelled.

The stage was set to open the drive on the Corps objective—Baguio.

Now came the big question. How was the Division to get there? The Japs obviously expected the main effort to be made along Kennon Road. Intelligence reports from the 43d Division, friendly Filipinos and Golden Cross patrols disclosed that the enemy had garrisoned the high ground along the road with the cream of his foot troops. He had an awesome defense in depth stretching from the road entrance at Camp One clear back to the summer capital where Yamashita confidently held forth in his headquarters. The Enemy Order of Battle Section of Division G-2 estimated that 2,500 Japanese troops made up the Kennon Road holding force on 1 March.

General Clarkson realized that any main effort made through this street-wide route of approach would be doomed to quick failure. There could be no element of surprise introduced into any moves along the road. Holed up in the perpendicular escarpments that rose from the road to heights of four and five thousand feet, the enemy would be capable of blasting any Division activity from its inception. Maneuver was limited. To top it off, the Japs had destroyed a long suspension bridge running over a deep rocky gorge midway between Camps Three



*Wrecked bridges, like this one at Camp Two, slowed down the 136th Infantry*

and Four. This was his ace in the hole. Even if the Division somehow managed to push up to the bridge it would be impossible to resume an attack and expect lines of supply and friendly howitzers to follow in the trail of front-line doughs.

Kennon Road, yes. There were more than 2,500 Japs there. Someone had to engage them. The Division was forced to take up the Kennon Road challenge—but not as the main effort.

In prewar times when Baguio was at its height of popularity as the summer capital of the Philippines, Kennon Road was referred to by Manila travel agencies as the "Scenic Route" to the mile-high playground. The natural beauty of the rocky bluffs lining the highway had once awed tourists with their majestic splendor. Now they afforded countless locations for Japanese snipers, machine guns and artillery pieces. The densely wooded cuts which indented the sides of the mountains provided excellent assembly areas for Jap reserves. As the road wound northward the flanking terrain rose higher and the cuts grew deeper, affording almost perfect defilade from artillery and small-arms fire. A man on the road could not so much as pick his teeth and go unobserved by the enemy.

The entire defensive set-up of the road was the fondest dream of a tactician come true. With terrain such as this in their possession it is small wonder that the Japanese expected to hold out in Northern Luzon for five years.

At any rate, the Division's course of action was clear. From Camp One to the suspension bridge ruins it would be slug, slug, slug.



*Tanks could move only short distances before blown bridges forced them to halt*

Although Kennon Road is generally identified as strictly a 136th Infantry engagement, units of the other two regiments saw heated action in this sector during the early days of the push. Actually the 1st Battalion, 123d Infantry, under Lt. Colonel Coates, was the first unit to shed its blood on the road. This battalion fought forward on the left side of the road to Twin Peaks while the 136th Infantry was still engaged in the Labayug-Alibeng area. Major Askren's 2d Battalion, 130th Infantry, was the next Golden Cross unit to receive a Kennon Road baptism. On 4 March it relieved Lt. Colonel Coates' battalion and continued the drive along the high ground to Twin Peaks.

Major Ehrlich's 1st Battalion was the first 136th unit to be committed along the mountain-lined gorge. Starting at Camp One, this outfit battled its way over the high ground on the right side of the road until it took Klondikes on 10 March. At this time, the Kennon Road force still shunned the highway proper. Activity was restricted to breaking through the maze of Japanese strongpoints lining the bluffs on both sides of the road. Colonel Cavenue, responsible for the entire sector, intended to launch a strike along the gutted concrete pavement and thus solidify his line as soon as the flank advances justified such a move.

Bitter opposition was apparent on both sides of the area. There were no weak spots on the flanks of the enemy positions; he depended





*Cliffs lining Kennon Road were almost perpendicular. In many instances it was possible to ascend them only by using ropes and ladders.*

on his deep rock-ribbed defense to halt every Golden Cross move. Whether it was the 136th on the right or the 130th on the left, fanatical resistance restricted all gains to a few meager yards each day. Long-range patrols were sent out to reconnoiter routes of approach which might enable the doughs to sweep in on the enemy's flanks. These patrols could bring back no information which might forestall the fast-developing frontal slugging match. However, they returned to their bases with valuable information on enemy weapons and troop concentrations, information which was useful in later fighting.

Regimental headquarters took off on a new tack. If it had to be a toe-to-toe battle, the Bearcats would do well to strip the Jap of a part of his observation.

Between Camp One and Pell Mell Creek stands Bue Bue, a hump-shaped skyscraper standing 3,700 feet above Kennon Road. Dominating the entire right side of the road up to Pell Mell Creek, Japanese observers on the mountain-top had unimpeded fields of vision. From Bue Bue they could diagnose all Golden Cross moves as soon as they began to develop. "Bart" told Baker Company to take Bue Bue.

Technical Sergeant Ray E. Livengood, later commissioned a second lieutenant in the field, started out for Bue Bue's heights with a Baker Company rifle platoon. The rest of the 1st Battalion was displaced forward over the mountains until it formed a line which curved from a point immediately southeast of Bue Bue to Kennon Road. Captain Cavender's Able Company fought for and won a piece of high ground southeast of the mountain. Baker Company, less one platoon, moved to the western foot of Bue Bue, and Charley Company took up positions between Baker and Kennon Road.

Sergeant Livengood, expecting nothing more than a small OP on Bue Bue, ran into a heavily defended strongpoint. His only route of advance from the south lay over a long, sweeping spur which led down the mountainside. As Livengood walked up the spur with his lead squad, he was met with fires from two enemy machine guns. Cover was scarce on the semi-barren spur and nine of the first eleven men to begin the climb were hit by 7.7mm bullets. Fortunately all of the casualties were walking wounded and managed to withdraw under their own power.

Livengood pulled his platoon back to a covered position and laid plans for another try. This time he committed a heavy-machine-gun squad from Dog Company which was attached to him. The HMG crew, led by squad leader Frank Sencen, opened up on one of the Jap gun positions as another squad attempted to cross the spur. Ser-





*Filipino carriers start the steep climb to 1st Battalion units on Bue Bue*

geant Sencen's gun covered one of the enemy Nambus, but the other enemy gun took the Dog Company piece under fire, seriously wounding Pfc. Alex Wojceichowski, the gunner. The Jap machine gun which had been silenced was now free to fight and again threw heavy fire into Livengood's platoon.

Bue Bue Japs continued to pour fire in the direction of Sergeant Sencen's attached gun, seeking to destroy it. Sencen, a husky blond New Yorker, sprinted across the grassy hill with two of his ammunition bearers and managed to pull the gun back to a defiladed spot. Without pausing he made the trip again, this time for Wojceichowski, who lay prostrate and bleeding on the side of the hill. Sergeant Sencen made this second try good also, even though he took a bullet in the arm while rescuing Wojceichowski.

Livengood was stopped cold again. He radioed Captain Kissel, his company commander, on the western side of Bue Bue with the rest of Baker Company, that he could not take his objective.

While the one Company B platoon was engaged on Bue Bue, Company C advanced on the high ground flanking the road. By nightfall on 10 March it was dug in on a meadow-like piece of ground overlooking Pell Mell Creek. The 3d Battalion of Bearcats, now on the left side in lieu of the 2d Battalion, 130th Infantry, had kept pace with the Charley Company move.

Now the time was ripe to drive a wedge through the middle. The 1st and 3d Battalions were ordered to hold fast and not attempt further advances until a force moving up the road proper joined the line.

Back at Sison, where the 2d Battalion was in regimental reserve after cleaning out the Labayug-Alibeng area, the force was formed. It



*An enemy 47mm antitank gun knocked out by counterbattery fire*

was initially a small one, consisting of Company F, under Lt. Wallace F. Gleason; a heavy-machine-gun platoon from Company H; the 2d Battalion assault group; battalion medical personnel; and a forward-observer party from the 210th Field Artillery Battalion. This composite group took its orders directly from Colonel Cavenee. It was called the X-Ray Force.

On 12 March X-Ray moved up Kennon Road to within five hundred yards of Pell Mell, detrucked and immediately struck off up the highway on foot. Everything was quiet along the road. As the doughs slowly walked forward in silence, the only noise to be heard was the sound of the Bued River—running parallel to the road on the left side—as it swirled against huge boulders in the river bed. At 1100 lead scouts closed on the regimental line at Pell Mell Creek. The force continued to move forward and instead of being the regimental laggard, it suddenly became the regimental spearhead. A patrol of guerrillas, led by Filipino Capt. Silverio Dulay, attached to the 3d Battalion, quickly moved out on the high ground to the left of the X-Ray Force, providing flank security.

An hour after leaving Pell Mell Creek, the force reached a small bridge just short of Camp Two. The Jap intended to use this bridge as a 136th Infantry stumbling block.

The enemy waited until the lead scouts had crossed the bridge and





*X-Ray Force moves north from Pell Mell Creek*

waved to their mates to follow, before cutting loose. From cleverly concealed mortar and machine-gun emplacements on the far side of the bridge he suddenly opened up as the first Fox Company platoon was caught bunched up on the span. Both scouts were cut down. Enemy snipers hidden in the rocky crags overlooking the road added to the sudden uproar with fusillades of rifle fire.

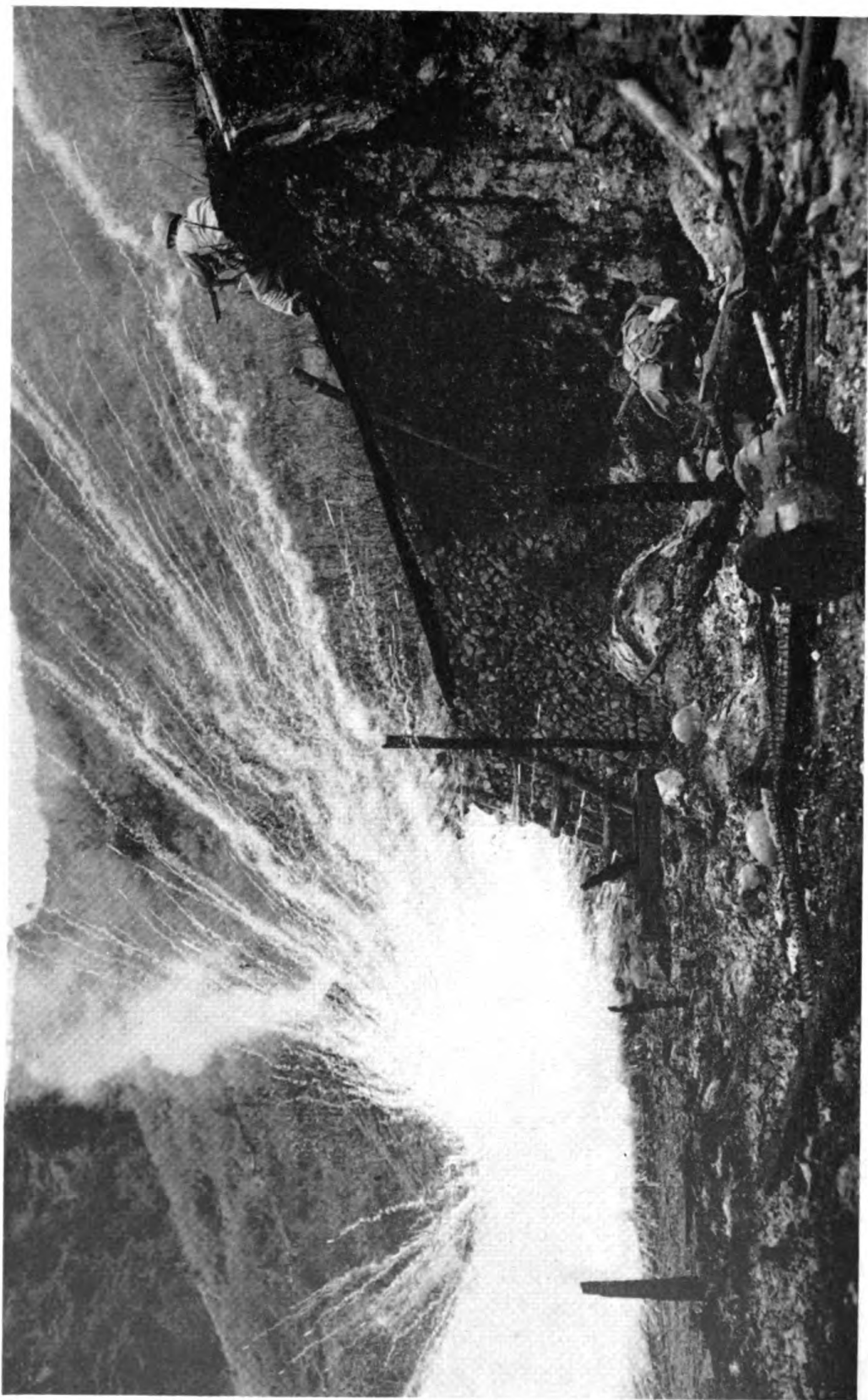
Platoon leaders and noncoms kept their men under control. The doughs pulled back from the bridge, leaving several of the wounded behind. Immediately they regrouped and started across in threes and fours, braving the murderous fires hitting them from their front and from the mountainside. X-Ray's mortars set up in defilade and were soon adjusted on enemy mortar and gun positions. Men not actually crossing the bridge unlimbered their M-1s in answer to the sniper fire. Gradually the tide of the fight turned. The enemy's automatic weapons slowly were blanketed under the barrage of mortar shells, and snipers hidden in the rocks were picked off one by one.

By 1530 the entire force had crossed the bridge and all casualties had been evacuated to rear medical installations. This was Round One on Kennon Road. Close, but it was the X-Ray Force that provided the haymaker. The first breach in the road defenses had been forced.

"Bart" followed up immediately by reinforcing his thin salient. Another section of mortars from How Company, the 3d Battalion assault group, and detachments from Company C, 108th Engineers, were rapidly sent forward. The engineers, under Capt. Frederick J. Lund, went to work as soon as they had checked in to the force CP. A by-pass, capable of taking tracked-vehicle traffic, was constructed alongside of the wreckage of the bridge. The following morning, 13 March, a platoon of medium tanks from the 775th Tank Battalion rumbled up to assist the force in blasting the Nips from their labyrinth of emplacements lining the highway. Item Company pulled stakes the same morning and followed Captain Dulay's guerrillas as additional flank security.

Dulay's patrol struck a bonanza the following day. Moving across country along the mountain tops, the group was prepared to bed down for the night when one of the members detected movement on an adjacent hill as he was digging his foxhole. Dulay took a dozen men with him and immediately went out to investigate. Moving stealthily in the gathering dusk, the guerrillas broke up into pairs and converged on the hilltop. Eleven Japs, unprepared to meet an intrusion, were quickly knifed or shot. This group of Nips had composed the personnel for an artillery observation post. Wire communications, range





George Company troops flush an enemy pillbox near Camp Three



finders, telescopes, and other fire-control instruments were either destroyed or captured by the Filipinos.

Scarcely an hour before it was wiped out, this CP had directed approximately twenty rounds of 105mm howitzer fire against the regiment's rear positions on the road. The first rounds landed in the Charley Company perimeter overlooking Pell Mell Creek. Five men were killed. This was the first enemy howitzer fire to fall on Golden Cross elements since the end of February when the Jap had been driven from his Question Mark holdings and his supporting artillery pieces captured. It was not, however, the last. From 14 March until the last few days before the Kennon Road was declared secured, the Japs slammed pointblank fire from guns at Camps Three and Four into 136th troops, CPs and ammunition dumps lining the road.

Lieutenant Gleason and his troops continued to make small daily gains through the Jap defense. The enemy kept a continual flow of rear guards moving south in efforts to halt the force's advance while he busied himself in the Camp Three area preparing a solid line of resistance. On the evening of 15 March, Gleason reported back to Colonel Cavenee that he was dug in one mile short of Camp Three. In the day's fighting his company had sustained several casualties and was down in strength to a point where the success of the drive was jeopardized unless he was reinforced. "Bart" notified Gleason, a six-footer weighing more than two hundred pounds, that George Company would assume the role of spearhead the following morning.

Shortly before noon, George Company, led by Lieutenant Weatherwax, 23-year-old ex-musician from Wichita, joined the force. Major Ivan L. Taylor, battalion executive officer, slogged up the road with Weatherwax and assumed command of the two-company unit as soon as contact was made with Gleason. Capt. William Garland's Anti-tank Company also joined X-Ray, and was spread out the length of the highway in a series of roadblocks. Caliber .50 machine guns, too cumbersome to be used by exhausted doughs in the hills, were employed at each barrier. The antitankers had the mission of keeping open lines of supply, communication and evacuation.

Meanwhile, what of the 1st Battalion? Charley Company was still near Pell Mell Creek, Able Company held fast on one side of Bue Bue and Baker on the other. On 17 March, "Bart" ordered Baker to make another attempt to take Bue Bue, but this time from the west where the entire company, less Livengood's platoon, was engaged in aggressive patrolling.

Major Ehrlich attached the battalion assault group to Baker Com-

pany for the attack. From the outset, Captain Kissel knew he would have to face the same problem that had confronted Livengood. His sergeant had tried to advance along a narrow spur from the south; Kissel was limited to the same type of razor-back from the west. At dawn on 17 March, a platoon from Company B started to crawl across the razor-back.

The enemy was obviously under orders to hold Bue Bue at all costs. Machine guns immediately opened up and felled the first Baker wave. Since the ridge was only seven yards wide, only four men could move abreast at one time. As soon as other Company B men filled the gaps and tried to crawl forward, they too went down. In a matter of minutes, the company had taken a dozen casualties and gained no ground.

That night Baker Company dug in at the foot of the razor-back waiting for morning and resumption of the attack. Captain Kissel decided to lead off the next attempt with the assault group. With a preponderance of automatic weapons, bazookas and flamethrowers, the assault group had the ideal armament to cope with the situation. Came dawn and the assault group moved out, followed by the 3d Platoon of the company.

With Sgt. William Thys, group leader, acting as scout, followed by BAR-man James Hollingsworth and flamethrower-operator Sgt. Arthur Parrott, the assault group was forced to essay the same trail used the previous day. Again the Jap was on the alert and blanketed Thys and Hollingsworth with fire. Thinking he had spotted the gun, Thys called Parrott up with the flamethrower. The Jap, seeing stocky Sergeant Parrott getting ready to unleash a ball of flame, fired first. Before Parrott got the chance to press his release, he was knocked to the ground with wounds in both legs and one arm. Hollingsworth immediately attempted to counter with BAR fire, but had his weapon shot from his hands when enemy bullets shredded the BAR's sights. Splinters of steel from his own weapon cut Hollingsworth about the face.

Again the company couldn't gain ground. Major Ehrlich sent orders to Charley Company, located at Pell Mell Creek, to move to Bue Bue and relieve Company B. Kissel in turn was directed to move down to the creek immediately upon his relief. Captain Fox took over Baker Company's mission.

Fox immediately called for artillery fire on the objective. Lt. Colonel Truxtun, commander of the 210th Field Artillery Battalion, personally went up to Bue Bue to adjust and direct fire. Standing in

full view of the enemy, he gradually brought his fire in on the ridge. Shells tore into the Jap positions all that afternoon and night. The next morning, 19 March, was selected for the fifth crack at Bue Bue.

Light mortars prefaced the attack with a 100-round barrage. The 2d Platoon, led by Lt. Sanford H. Winston, began to creep across the razor-back. Instead of countering with his machine guns, the enemy unloosed a barrage of knee-mortar shells. The first round landed in the midst of the first four-man wave composed of Lieutenant Winston, Pfc. Willis Smith and Edward Stilwell and Sgt. Alvin Lewis. Smith was wounded in the neck by a fragment and both Stilwell and Lewis were killed. Pfc. Erick Ellison and Jerome Kroeger moved up to fill out the line.

Suddenly Smith, who had refused Lieutenant Winston's order to go to the rear for medical aid, sprang forward with submachine gun spouting. Infuriated by the pain of his wound, and the loss of a good friend in Sergeant Lewis, the quiet youngster from Stidham (Oklahoma) blasted three Japs as they crouched in their spider holes. He was ready to move down the ridge when the Nip machine guns opened up, spattering bullets at his feet and forcing him to take cover. Kroeger, Ellison and Lieutenant Winston then raced forward to join Smith. Among them they accounted for four Japs in the fifteen-yard trip.

As soon as the enemy guns quieted, the four-man team threw grenades and rushed forward as soon as they exploded. The process was repeated. Five more Japs, hunched in spider holes to escape their own machine guns, were killed. The Japs retaliated with combined mortar and machine-gun fires. Six inches above the riflemen's heads the air was full of flying steel; bullets landed so close that chunks of sod were kicked into their eyes.

Realizing that further advance could only result in needless casualties, the platoon leader decided to call for fire from the Charley Company mortars. Lieutenant Winston heaved a smoke grenade in the direction of the enemy guns and fell back with Smith, Ellison and Kroeger until the barrage was finished.

Charley's 60s took exactly three rounds to adjust on the white blossom of smoke. Thirty rounds later, the fires were completed and the same four men prepared for another rush. But the mortars had done little if any good. The same machine-gun and mortar greeting was forthcoming as soon as the Japanese detected the men. Smith again drove toward the enemy by himself, wiping out another brace of Japs before he had his arm shattered by a bullet. Forward movement was halted.

Again the Bue Bue defense had held up. This one Charley Company platoon covered more yards, killed more Japs, and remained in closer contact with the enemy for a longer period than any of the other attacking units, but the net result was the same. Pfc. Smith, Ellison and Kroeger and Lieutenant Winston were all decorated for their gallantry in this fight: Smith received the DSC and the others the Silver Star. Colonel Cavenee told Captain Fox to move back to Pell Mell Creek and bypass Bue Bue. The garrison there could be dealt with at the regiment's leisure.

Bue Bue action and the rapid advance along Kennon Road combined to disturb the Japanese high commanders. The defenders were instructed to resume their former tactics of night-time harassments. They became more aggressive. Every night from 18 March until the windup of the Kennon Road fight was marked by enemy activity. The Japanese made it SOP to hit at least one of the company positions on the road and off to its sides. Demolition teams attempted nocturnal infiltrations through the regimental line to CPs and ammunition dumps located well behind the forward line. Fortunately, security detachments were able to intercept these thrusts and turn them back.

Jap artillery trebled its output. Every move on the road was an irresistible temptation to enemy cannoneers. The regimental casualty rate soared. The inability of the Golden Cross artillery to place accurate counterbattery fires on the Nip's mountain guns resulted in a general shrinking of morale. L-4s based at the Rosario Cub strip flew constant patrols over the road and its surrounding masses of mountain. But still the Japanese were able to wheel out their pieces, get off a few rounds at almost point-blank range, and then roll the guns back into cliffside caves. The entire procedure was finished before pilots could secure a "fix."

"Bart's" Bearcats had absorbed brutal punishment in their fifteen days of Kennon Road campaigning. The ruggedness of the fight could not be attributed to the enemy alone. Troops were completely exhausted. The hellish climbs up the near-perpendicular slopes caused almost as many casualties as enemy action. Daily spanning of one steep mountain after another lowered the body resistance of 136th men to the point where simple fevers removed a large number from the battle. Courage galore was apparent as each unit sought to accomplish its share of the mission. But ordinary courage was not enough. It took superhuman fortitude to stand the filth, flies, Japs, and daily patrols.

Salt tablets were life-savers. It took only three or four minutes of steady climbing in the overpowering tropical heat to drench a man in

his own perspiration. Sweat seeped through web equipment and leather boots, and sometimes actually bleached M-1 stocks. Common sights along the mountain paths were wet, salt-covered doughs lying uninjured on the trail because they could not gather enough strength to maintain the pace of a plodding, exhausted column. It was pitiful to see these infantrymen madly rip their clothes with sweat-drenched hands in order to capture an eddy of cool air.

But there could be no let-up. General Clarkson already had sent his other infantry regiments toward Baguio in the main effort. It became more imperative than ever for the 136th Infantry to keep this major enemy force tied up along Kennon Road.

X-Ray Force was content to sit tight outside Camp Three from 17 to 19 March. Offensive action was confined to platoon patrols sent up the road on close-in security missions. The 1st and 3d Battalions handled the long-range reconnaissance jobs. One patrol, made up of a Fox Company platoon, ran into a strong ambush while checking the highway north of the force position on 19 March. As they slowly moved along the road in open squad columns, the men were suddenly subjected to heavy fire from a Nambu on a grass-covered bluff jutting out of the mountainside. The two squad leaders in the lead were hit by the opening rounds.

An assistant squad leader, Cpl. Robert O. Kopplin, immediately took command of the situation. Designating one squad to clear the road and form a base of fire, he led the others to a partially covered position off the highway. Corporal Kopplin reappeared on the pavement a moment later armed with an automatic rifle. Firing from the hip, he started toward the bluff. Unable to resist such an inviting target, the Japanese brought all of their fire to bear on the corporal.

Miraculously weathering the hail of lead tearing up the concrete at his feet, Kopplin shouted to his comrades to leave their cover and follow him. Still spraying the bluff as he moved forward, the corporal led a bold counterattack which spilled over the hill, causing the enemy to fall back. A parting shot from a retreating sniper killed him as he stood on the edge of a Nip emplacement and fired down into it. Corporal Kopplin was posthumously awarded the DSC.

Just after sundown that evening the enemy retaliated. Waiting until artillery L-4s had ceased operation, the Nips shelled the force command post. Major Taylor, X-Ray's commander, rose to his knees in his fox-hole searching for a give-away gun flash as rounds exploded in the CP area. An HE round abruptly screamed into a tree next to his hole and the major was instantly killed in the resulting blast. Shrapnel





*Hairpin curve at Camp Three, a favorite target of Jap cannoneers*

from the same shell severed the leg of Lieutenant Peebles, regimental I & R Platoon leader.

Regimental and Division intelligence believed that the enemy was stepping up patrol actions and artillery fires to mask his preparations for a counterattack on Kennon Road. Patrols brought back unmistakable evidences to substantiate this theory. A thirty-man reconnaissance group from King Company, led by Lt. Orie C. Wiebusch, spotted two enemy companies assembled on the western slope of Hill 5500. Lieutenant Wiebusch's patrol also observed small groups of Japanese patrolling the trail net from this hill down to Camp Three. Either the enemy was reinforcing his line at Camp Three, or else he was gathering enough men there to launch a counterthrust. Division headquarters chose to believe the latter.

As a result, X-Ray Force was dissolved on 20 March and the entire 2d Battalion moved into the outskirts of Camp Three on 21 March. Lt. Colonel Haycock assumed command and set up a CP just off the highway. Protective measures were undertaken at once. Thousands of sandbags were hauled forward by S-4. Guns were emplaced, fields of fire were cleared, and commanding ground fully developed. Con-

certina rolls and double-apron fences wired in all battalion strong-points.

Enemy artillery fires began a steady pounding the following morning. Artillery pilots and observers, happy that the enemy had finally decided to declare himself, circled the mountains like vultures, bringing Golden Cross counterbattery fire on several gun positions. In light of this the Jap was forced to commit artillery reserves. Pieces of 15cm caliber, located near the Loacon Airfield in the Baguio suburbs, augmented the Japs' Kennon Road batteries. Small raiding parties followed up behind the Nip fires, seeking a soft spot in the 2d Battalion line.

Colonel Cavenee quickly decided to initiate an advance and beat the Jap to the punch. Capt. Joseph H. Sherrard IV, Easy Company commander, was called back to the CP and given orders to drive through Camp Three that same afternoon. His mission was to seize the high ground overlooking the ruins of the suspension bridge between Camps Three and Four. Sherrard's troops had to fight in order to break through Camp Three, but the enemy, caught out of position, was powerless to halt the move. The majority of Japanese foot troops was grouped on the slopes of Hill 5500 and Bench Mark Middle. To intercept Sherrard they would have had to abandon their positions on the east side of the road and cut across the pavement.

By dusk Easy Company had managed to fortify two sharply rising knobs covering the southern entrance to the bridge. George Company meanwhile pulled the battalion right flank up to Camp Three. Only token resistance met Weatherwax as his men cleared the summit of a 3,000-foot-high hill and quickly developed defenses there.

As Company G was heating coffee over small fires the next morning the enemy launched a surprise assault. Sixty Nips hacked away at the outer line of the perimeter as their mortars and machine guns raked the company position. Quickly the fight resolved itself into a hand-to-hand affair. Numerous grenade duels highlighted the action. When the Jap saw that he could not advance frontally, he pulled back, opened up his mortars and then drove into the flanks. The net result was the same—no gain. Convinced that nothing in their standard armament could force a breach, the enemy pulled a new stunt out of their repertoire of cunning.

Japanese troops brought up cans of gasoline and sprayed it around the high *cogon* grass on the mountain top. In a matter of seconds the dry, withered blades went up in a smoky, roaring blaze. A favoring wind whipped the flames into full fury and soon dense clouds of black

smoke were drawn over the George Company area. Crying, choking men were forced to abandon the summit and pull down into a deep draw on the southern slope. The Japanese followed the fire and occupied the ground as soon as the flames and smoke abated.

Weatherwax reorganized his company and led it forward in a counterattack before the Nips could effect a solid defense. Only after a bloody fight in which the company sustained a dozen casualties could Company G dislodge the enemy and retake the ground.

That night at 0345 the enemy shifted the fight to another strong-point. This time they selected the battalion CP as a target for their offensive. For two and a half hours the same type of hand-to-hand battle raged. Not until dawn was the enemy beaten off. The assault was repulsed without loss to the battalion command group, while sixteen Jap marauders lay dead in front of the CP.

George Company obviously held a strange attraction for the Japanese. Just after the moon disappeared at 0400 on the morning of 26 March, two platoons of Japanese made a second assault on the company perimeter. This time they attacked without advance-notice mortar and machine-gun fire. The first inkling of the attack came when the Nips rocked a section of the installation with grenades. But by 26 March Company G's holdings had been reinforced with sandbags and barbed wire. Weatherwax brought protective mortar fires down along his wire line and reduced the thrust to nothing more than a suicidal assault.

Finally convinced that he had neither the weapons nor men to unseat the company, the enemy again drenched the hill with gasoline and waited for fire and smoke to do the work that couldn't be accomplished by direct assault. Just as the flames mounted and began to inch toward Company G, a sudden shift in the direction of the wind brought them roaring back upon the attackers. Many were trapped before they could backtrack to safety. At daylight George Company checked its holdings. Within twenty yards of the outer foxholes riflemen found twenty-five charred bodies, thirty-one rifles, a light machine gun and a mortar.

During a routine search of the Japanese corpses a valuable sketch and field order were removed from the body of an enemy captain. The scorched order revealed that the enemy intended to reinforce his garrison on Bench Mark Middle, and mount his next counterattack from that terrain feature. "Bart" alerted Lt. Colonel Hulbert's force for an all-out battalion strike against Bench Mark on the following morning, 27 March.

Frequent raids made against 2d Battalion positions on the road



*Division engineers erected this monument on Kennon Road at the close of the Battle for Baguio*

and off to the right indicated the Japs' desire to make these positions untenable. Accelerated artillery fires were brought down on the battalion after each enemy assault, and took a terrific toll of personnel. Not only did these fires materially reduce the strength of the line units, but they practically decimated the battalion command group. In the week following Major Taylor's death, the S-1, Capt. Stanley Wicher; the Communications Officer, Lt. Joseph H. Bunch; the Ammunition Officer, Lt. Thurman Gray; and the Antitank Officer, Lt. Boyd I. Antes,

were all killed by fires directed against the CP. Captain Wicher and Lieutenants Bunch and Gray were felled by artillery fire, and Lieutenant Antes met his death on a security patrol that was hit by machine-gun fire.

Lieutenant Colonel Haycock was wounded by a small shell fragment although he did not require hospitalization. Only Capt. Ben Conrad, S-3, Capt. Morton Wolfson, S-2, and Lt. Eugene Bruaw, S-4, managed to go through the shellings unscathed.

Bench Mark Middle was hit according to plan. After a heavy mortar and artillery concentration had pounded the slopes, Item, King and Love pressed forward over the difficult terrain. Movement was co-ordinated brilliantly even though the only contact between companies was by radio. So finely timed was the approach march that all three groups hit the slopes at the correct moment—1130, 27 March. The usual fire fight ensued, but each company managed to gain a foothold on the ridge. By dark I, K and L all held favorable positions for an early morning assault on the crest.

They moved out at dawn of the next day. The enemy, hit from three sides, was slowly pulverized by heavy multi-sided fire. By 1000 the Jap garrison had been either killed or driven off. There would be no Japanese counterattack coming from Bench Mark Middle.

Regimental positions along the road grew stable as March faded into April. The order was: "Hold what you've got. No company advances. Offensive activity is to be limited to security patrols." It was just as well. The pace had been a killing one. Casualties—battle and non-battle—had brought rifle companies below effective fighting strength. Some rifle platoons were down to eight and ten men. Diarrhea and yellow jaundice were rampant throughout all battalions. There had been no rest since the beginning of the drive.

But if the regiment's condition was bad, the Jap's was worse. The constant pressure placed against him on both sides of the road had depleted his infantry elements. He too suffered the ravages of disease. Division Artillery batteries had blasted his supply depots and shredded supply trains as they journeyed toward the front. He came to rely more and more on his artillery to halt the forward surge of the 136th Infantry.

Fire from 75s and 105s persisted during the "hold fast" period. Fearful of detection, the enemy had been unable to displace his guns to the rear as the regiment advanced. By 1 April it seemed as if his rounds zoomed into company positions a split-second after they left their barrels. On this date Charley Company—holding high ground



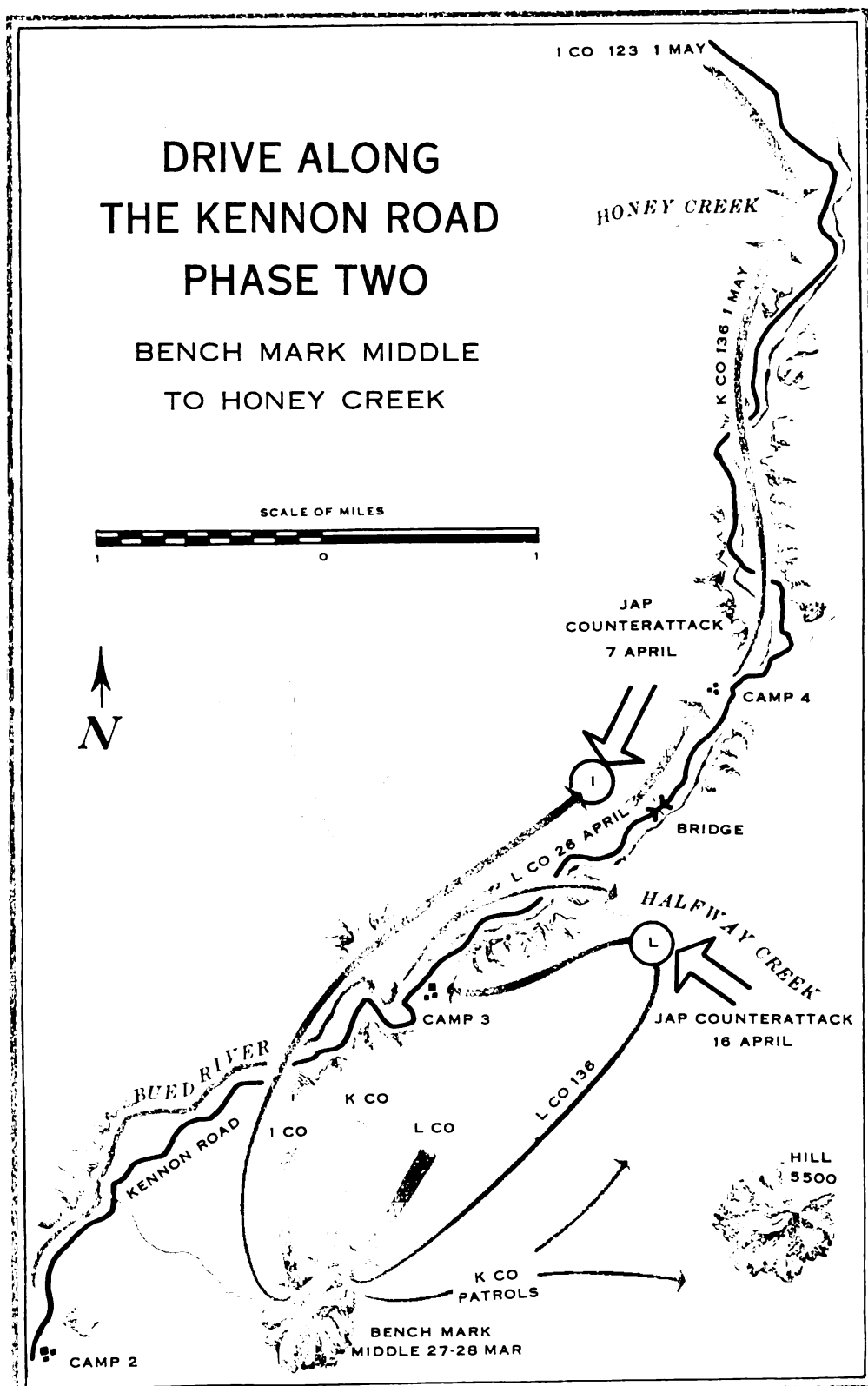
near Camp Three—received twenty-two rounds in half as many minutes. Half of them were live shells and the remainder duds. Only the comparatively poor quality of Japanese ordnance prevented the enemy from reaping the full in casualties. During the Charley Company shelling one round split the ground between two men, ripping a foot-wide furrow the length of the foxhole. Both doughs were unharmed.

Relief finally came for the 2d Battalion and part of the 1st on 7 April. The 3d Battalion, with Charley Company attached, took over the entire sector. The mission was the same: hold fast and patrol. Colonel Cavenee compensated somewhat for the shortage of 3d Battalion personnel by giving Lt. Colonel Hulbert an abundance of supporting fire. A platoon of 4.2-inch mortars from Company B, 98th Chemical Mortar Battalion, two M-7s from Captain Duchala's Cannon Company, and two medium tanks from the 775th Tank Battalion were committed from regimental reserve.

With one undersized battalion slated to do the work of three, a redistribution of troops was necessary. Company K, commanded by Capt. Bernard Nussbaum, fortified all of Bench Mark Middle. Capt. George Lindsay and Company L joined Nussbaum in holding the right side of the road. Love Company took over a piece of high ground overlooking the south bank of Halfway Creek. Charley Company stayed in place near Camp Three. The remaining rifle company, Item, constructed defensive positions on a high ridge across the canyon from Charley Company. Heavy machine guns from Company M, under Capt. William Batteiger, were attached to K and L, while two HMGs from Dog Company went to Company I. The battalion CP remained in a large cave just off the highway.

The Jap was hungry but he wasn't blind. He had waited and hoped for a situation such as this. Selecting Item Company—alone on the left flank—as the battalion soft spot, he wasted little time before counterattacking. Just seven hours after the battalion moved into these new positions the Nips struck hard. First came an artillery barrage against the Company I perimeter. This fire lifted and an entire Japanese company swarmed over the hill. Company D's heavies, cross-firing with the rifle company's lights, opened up on final protective lines. Scores of Nips fell as soon as they came into range.

Somehow a few of the enemy managed to breast the lines of fire and came sprinting toward the outer holes, pausing only to heave hand grenades. Just as they closed with Company I, the enemy artillery suddenly opened up again. Shells ripped into the perimeter, hitting American and Jap alike. Even with his own artillery pounding his



Map 13

exposed ranks, the enemy refused to withdraw. Crazy with shock caused by their own guns, the Japs charged right into heavy machine guns. They were quickly stacked up in piles. The artillery bombardment stopped suddenly and a semblance of sanity returned to the Japs. Without pausing to gather any of their dead, the survivors fled.

Both Dog Company squad leaders, Sgts. Max Kujawa and James Drennan, were killed by shell fragments when the enemy fired into his own troops.

Charley Company was detached from the 3d Battalion on 9 April and sent east to Tebbo where a major fight had developed on the Division right flank. Consequently, three rifle companies were left to handle a vital assignment formerly filled by nine. To offset this loss, ground action was temporarily halted and greater emphasis placed on artillery and air strikes. For a solid week all offensive action was in the hands of aerial observers flying out of Rosario in liaison planes. In addition to normal artillery-adjustment functions, they guided in air strikes on enemy troop concentrations and supply points on Hill 5500 and the nearby Lablab Creek. The HE-Napalm treatment threw remaining Jap defenses into a chaotic state. Pockets of foot troops were decimated; whole batteries of mountain guns destroyed.

The Jap was growing weak. Circumstances forced him to act in the manner of the little Dutch boy who plugged the leak in the dyke. This time, however, there were a dozen holes and the Nip had but ten fingers to block them. Japanese commanders had been forced to weaken Kennon Road regiments by employing elements of them at Asin where the 130th Infantry was fighting forward toward Baguio in the main effort. Captured documents indicated that most of the Japanese 64th, 71st and 72d Infantry Regiments had been pulled off the road and committed in other Northern Luzon sectors.

Despite his lack of men and matériel, the enemy refused to acknowledge the Bearcats' successes. He made a last-ditch effort to penetrate the 3d Battalion line on 16 April. Three days of steady artillery fires preceded his attempts to hammer a wedge into Lt. Colonel Hulbert's positions. Captain Lindsay's company was the first unit to be hit.

At 0300 a Japanese force of company size charged the Love Company perimeter. For sheer desperation this counterattack was unmatched in Kennon Road fighting. The Company L machine gunners and automatic riflemen cut down the swarms of frenzied enemy as they heedlessly rushed into final protective lines. The shrill battle cries of the Nips and the moans of their wounded could be heard above the roar of battle. One BAR man, Pfc. Burton J. Lee, was overrun by

several who miraculously broke through the line of fire. Lee leaped out of his hole and brought down six Nips with a single magazine from his rifle.

Lee's foxhole was at the point of the bitterest action the following morning when the Nips shook off the effects of their nocturnal beating and returned in a second counterattack. It was the same story as in the first assault. Again many broke through and converged on Lee's foxhole. This time the intrepid gunner walked out to meet them. Pausing only to press his magazine release and insert a fresh ammunition load, Lee threw round after round into the tightly packed Japanese ranks, causing the enemy to hesitate and then hit the ground. Lee continued to advance, his weapon active every step of the way. Dumbfounded doughs, who had never before witnessed daring of this sort, saw Lee suddenly stagger as several puffs of dust showed on the back of his fatigue blouse. A full burst of Nambu fire had caught him squarely in the chest.

Almost cut in half, Lee didn't fall. Those watching him could see him fight to hold his feet with his BAR still spitting fire! Four, five, six yards, firing all the time, then Lee abruptly dropped his rifle and pitched to the grass, dead. Captain Lindsay recommended him for a posthumous Medal of Honor. General MacArthur's headquarters reduced the award to a Distinguished Service Cross.

Company L continued to repel the enemy's efforts to puncture the perimeter. Finally the Nips gathered several of their wounded and withdrew.

Now it was up to the 3d Battalion to see exactly what the Jap had left in the Camp Three-Camp Four area. After another seven days of air strikes and artillery shellings, Lieutenant Colonel Hulbert organized a reconnaissance in force. Two platoons of Company L, augmented by a pair of 775th Tank Battalion mediums, made up the unit. At 1000 on 26 April lead scouts of the force left the battalion CP and began the march up the pavement.

Rifled 4.2-inch mortars supported the move by laying concentrations on all suspected assembly areas in the Love Company path of advance. Not a shot was fired until the first platoon began to search out the banks of Halfway Creek. Stubborn opposition was encountered there. The enemy spilled onto the roadway from their caves and made repeated efforts to blow up the supporting tanks with satchel charges. Riflemen moving abreast of the tanks wiped out most of them with M-1 fire. The rest ran back to their emplacements near the creek.

Freed from the threat of destruction, the tanks rumbled up along-

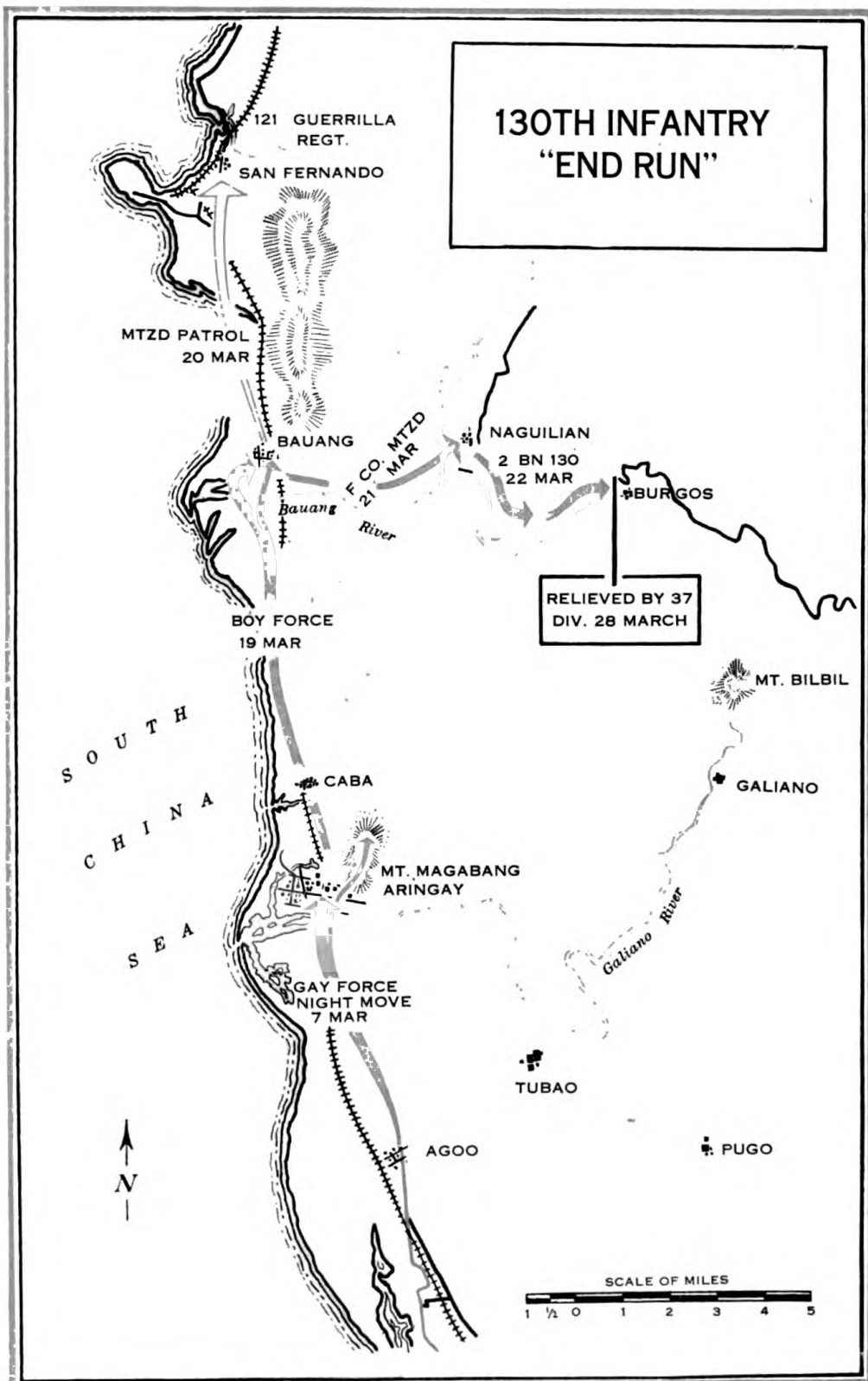
side the creek and poured point-blank 75mm fire into the network of caves and foxholes. Mortar observers radioed back to their guns and had salvos of heavy shells on the way in a matter of minutes. Infantrymen followed up the HE and phosphorus fires of the 4.2s, moving into the enemy positions as soon as supporting fires were lifted.

At 1500 the reconnaissance was completed and the force returned to the battalion CP. Two days later Lt. Daniel R. Bauer took a patrol from Company L and returned to Halfway Creek. If any part of the Japanese rear guard had managed to survive the tank-mortar-infantry fires, it had fled the area. Not a live Nip was encountered in the course of the day-long patrol. Bauer and his men counted fifty-five Japanese bodies at Halfway Creek.

Baguio fell to the 33d and 37th Divisions on 29 April. This was the signal for remaining Japanese assembled in the area stretching from Camp Four north to Baguio to pack up and head for the safety of the mountains east of the city. Artillery L-4s had been alerted for just such a move and ranged over the hills in search of fleeing columns. On the day that Baguio fell, an air observer picked up a long Nip column withdrawing down the eastern slope of Hill 5500. He waited until the entire party had cleared the hillside and then brought sudden fire crawling the length of the column. When the black smoke of the explosions dissolved, the pilot flew close above the trail and then radioed the fire direction center that almost a hundred Japanese had been torn apart by the concentration.

Division was anxious to secure the area south of Baguio now that the city had fallen. Orders were issued directing a link-up of the Baguio and Kennon Road forces. Lt. Colonel Hulbert dispatched Company K and the tanks to move up the road past Camp Four and meet Company I, 123d Infantry, coming south from the resort. Scouts of the two companies sighted each other near Honey Creek on 1 May. That afternoon the entire 3d Battalion walked the length of the road and moved into Baguio.





Map 14

## Chapter 10: End Run Through Bauang

IT DID not take a Clausewitz to surmise that Kennon Road would prove to be the slowest and bloodiest route to Baguio. The mountain pass was among the most heavily fortified strips of terrain in Northern Luzon. From cunningly concealed positions high up on the walls of the gorge, the Japanese were able to bitterly contest all 136th Infantry efforts to break through. Maintaining the Kennon Road drive proved a costly proposition for the 33d Division from its inception. More manpower and supporting weapons than the Golden Cross could afford to spare were tied up in the brutal slugging match. Yet with so many of the enemy in position alongside the road, Division had little choice but to engage them. Accomplishment of the Division mission by the 136th—seizure of Baguio—was out of the question, yet the 33d could not quit Kennon Road.

Division headquarters, closely following 136th activities on the road, worked out another plan when it became clear that Colonel Cavenee's regiment could do nothing but contain their adversaries. Even the hard-pressed 136th doughboy, anxious for reinforcement, readily admitted that Division was following a practical course of action. He did not have to be a "big picture" logistician to observe present supply and medical evacuation difficulties on Kennon Road. Too often he had seen Filipino carrying parties reach forward companies in a state of exhaustion after negotiating the near-perpendicular hills with rations, ammunitions and water. He knew also that litter bearers taking casualties to the battalion aid stations were forced to march for a full day in order to cover four hundred map yards.

On 3 March Division selected two new routes for the main effort toward Baguio. One path of advance carried up the coastal road from Agoo through Aringay and Bauang to San Fernando, veering off to the summer capital at Bauang. The other was to start at Pugo and run northeast over the mountains to Baguio. Great risk would be attached to both efforts. The two routes were virtually unexplored by American forces and Division lacked complete data on how strongly the enemy had garrisoned them. Initial advances would have to move slowly until the situation developed.

Corps had no infantry forces with which to reinforce the two moves. Neither did the 33d. The 130th Infantry, chosen for the end run to San Fernando, had but two battalions available at this time. Elements of the 123d Infantry would be tied up with the Pugo phase. Due to its Kennon Road commitments the 136th Infantry could not be counted upon to assist either regiment.

However, the plan had a definite bright side. Securing the coastal road up to San Fernando meant a junction between the 130th Infantry

and Col. Russell W. Volckmann's guerrillas who had pushed southward into San Fernando and were currently fighting to take the city. Contact with Colonel Volckmann would bring with it consolidation of all American gains on the left side of Northern Luzon. With the coastal road in Division possession, auxiliary flanking moves toward Baguio could be launched to augment the projected drive out of Bauang.

Another point of consideration was the terrain. The fights for Bench Mark and Question Mark Hills left no doubt in anyone's mind that the enemy was toughest when he held and developed commanding heights. What would happen at Aringay and Bauang where the Japanese would be forced to defend comparatively open ground? Division planners retained vivid memories of the early days on Luzon when a "flying column" composed of the 1st Cavalry Division and the 37th Division rolled over the enemy holding the Central Plain. They had made it a matter of record that the enemy was not nearly so successful on open ground as he was in mountain and jungle.

Two weeks of rest since the fall of Question Mark found the 130th Infantry, less its 2d Battalion, freshened and battle-tempered for the end run. Bivouacked in Esperanza as Division reserve, the Blackhawks waited for the completion of reconnaissances and the issuance of attack orders.

Aringay, a small municipality twelve miles north of Damortis on the coastal road, was chosen as the first 130th Infantry objective. Located on the northern bank of the Aringay River, the small *barrio* of 1,500 persons was distinguished by a huge bridge over which the main highway ran into the town. A triumph of civil engineering, the 22-span, 938-foot-long bridge had been erected at a cost in excess of two million dollars. Capture of this bridge intact would be of inestimable value in assuring the success of the end run.

Pictures taken by artillery liaison pilots disclosed that the Aringay River bridge was in an excellent state of maintenance. Only one of its spans had been hit by American bombers. Lt. Colonel Kane, Division Engineer, predicted that a Bailey span could offset the damage. Senior commanders became gravely concerned as the time for the attack neared. Seizure of the bridge was paramount in their minds. Should the enemy repel forces trying to take the bridge, a protracted battle for control of the road was bound to develop.

Regimental plans called for a small group of infantrymen, heavily reinforced, to move toward Aringay as a reconnaissance in force. Once the bridge and town were taken, other more powerful elements of the 130th would pass through and mount an all-out drive on Bauang.



*The Aringay bridge*

Units making up the reconnaissance, called Gay Force, included Baker Company; a platoon of heavy machine guns; the 1st Battalion's 81mm mortar platoon; the regimental I&R Platoon, commanded by Lieutenant Kenneth Lyon; a few Recon Troop scout cars; and a platoon of M-7s mounting 105mm howitzers from Cannon Company, 130th Infantry. Capt. Bob Balch controlled the howitzer platoon.

Engineer support was provided by the 2d Platoon of Company B, 108th Combat Engineers, and the battalion reconnaissance team. Corps attached the 55th Field Artillery Battalion to support the operation in conjunction with batteries of the 124th. In command of Gay Force was Major Charlie Y. Talbott, executive officer of the 1st Battalion.

A unique part of the plan—one that surprised observers and participants alike—was the decision to capture the bridge and *barrio* under cover of darkness. The move on Aringay would mark the first time that any element of the 33d Division conducted large-scale offensive operations at night. Earlier in the campaign both the 136th and 130th had successfully experimented with night operations but these were limited to approach marches, medical evacuations and ambushes. Troops of the Gay Force, schooled to fight only during the daylight hours, were impressed with the fact that they were inaugurating a new style of combat for the Golden Cross.

At noon on 6 March all Gay Force elements were assembled at Damortis. Final plans were fully discussed; men were given a last opportunity for hot food and clean clothes.



*Filipino residents of Aringay return to the barrio after its liberation by the 130th Infantry*

It was 0300 on the morning of 7 March when the motorized advance guard of Gay Force pulled out of Damortis and pointed toward Aringay. Slowly the column stole along the hard-packed gravel road. An eerie silence hung like a pall over the troops. Less than a thousand yards short of the bridge the small convoy pulled into the brush lining the road and the guard detrucked. There was no noise as the men got into position for the foot march to the objective. Capt. James L. Brown, commanding the advance guard, radioed Talbott that he was prepared to advance. Talbott ordered him to proceed. At this precise moment the main body of Gay Force, on trucks in Damortis, moved out in the direction of Aringay to support the bridge crossing.

Captain Brown's group reached the bridge entrance without alerting the enemy. Reconnaissance Troop scout cars, mounting 37mm guns, quickly found positions on each side of the bridge. Captain Balch's M-7s also dispersed to both sides, ready to fire upon targets of opportunity. When all supporting weapons were in position, Brown signalled the engineers forward. Members of the reconnaissance section, moving in short rushes, sprinted onto the bridge. Efficiently and rapidly they searched each of the spans for hidden demolitions and found none.

Word went back to Major Talbott—who had since arrived with the main body—that the bridge was clear. Talbott did not wait for further developments. He sent Gay Force streaming into Aringay. Once in the town, the column systematically searched every house and street in the *barrio*. Not a Jap could be found. Still inclined to be cautious despite the lack of activity, Talbott separated his force into several small units, each of which built a perimeter around a different section



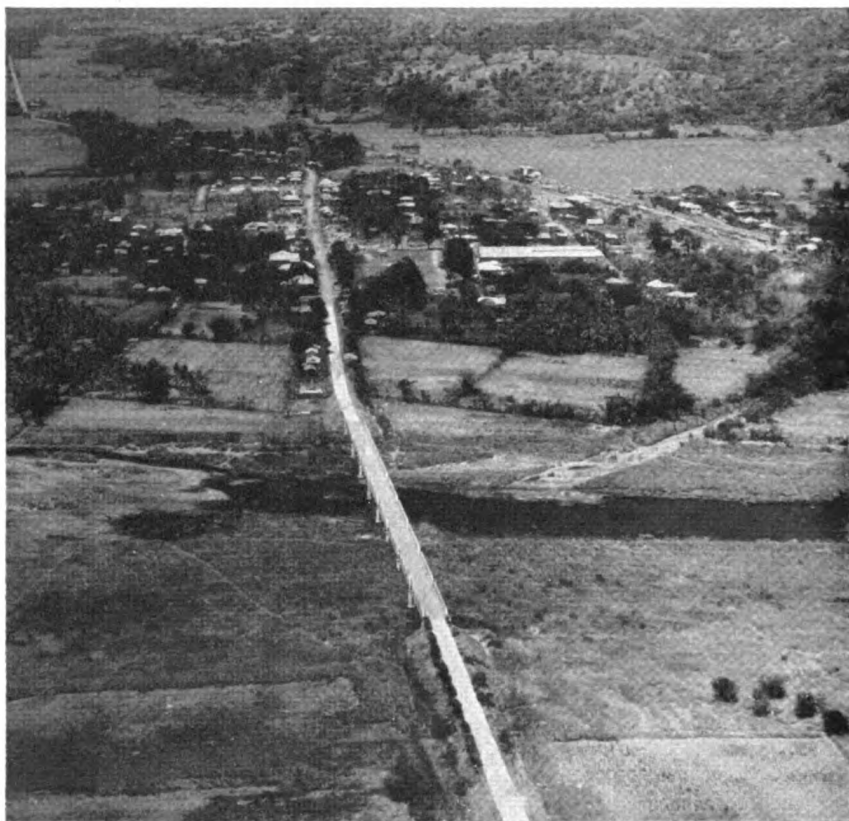
of the town. Roadblocks went up at all intersections. Still no enemy counteraction was forthcoming. Aringay went to the 130th Infantry without a shot fired.

Gay Force positions were reinforced at daylight when Lt. Colonel Jessup and the rest of the 1st Battalion reached Aringay. Immediately Gay Force was absorbed into the larger unit and the remainder of the mission was turned over to the battalion. Patrols went out to reconnoiter sections of the road and a string of hills north of Aringay and east of the highway. Foremost of these hills was 1,000-foot Mount Magabang which commanded an excellent view of Aringay. The I&R Platoon, under Lieutenant Lyon, was told to reconnoiter Magabang and determine whether it was manned by the enemy.

Lyon, moving slowly in order to search the many draws leading down from Magabang, found no Japanese during his approach march. As he prepared to mount the slope of the objective, Lyon radioed his position and lack of contact to battalion headquarters. The platoon then began the ascent, moving along a densely wooded spur that ran straight to the crest of Magabang. When the last man in the column had been swallowed up in the thick vegetation, two platoons of enemy, located on each side of the spur, opened up on Lyon's force, catching the entire platoon in a murderous crossfire.

Even though this fire was pouring into their ranks from point-blank range, members of the platoon could see no enemy or guns. Only after they deployed and brought answering fire to bear on suspected gun positions could they correctly diagnose the situation. Barring the platoon's path to Magabang was the most cleverly camouflaged group of Nips yet encountered by the 130th on Luzon. Light machine guns had been dug deep into the *cogon* grass on the hillside and Japanese gunners were firing along wafer-thin fields of fire cut through the grass. Each emplacement had a cloak of *cogon* shrouding it to blend with the background. In the same manner, enemy riflemen protecting the machine guns were clothed in caps and capes of matching *cogon* grass. After a short fire fight Lyon's men were forced to gather their casualties and withdraw back to Aringay.

As soon as Lt. Colonel Jessup received Lyon's report he alerted Company C to advance on Magabang that same afternoon. Charley Company left at 1400 with its commander, Captain Kelly, accompanying the lead platoon. By dusk the unit was grouped just below the point on the slope where the I&R Platoon had run into so much trouble. Certain that he would become engaged in a sharp fire fight, Kelly decided to dig in for the night and hit the mountain at dawn.



*An aerial photo of the Bauang bridge shows the town in the background*

In the next day's early morning haze an artillery-mortar preparation pounded enemy positions for several minutes before jumpoff. Kelly himself adjusted this fire, first getting Cannon Company on target and then bringing in artillery and mortar fires on top of the M-7s. As soon as the barrage lifted, two Charley Company platoons swept forward as rapidly as the terrain would permit, anxious to assault the Japanese before they recovered from the heavy shelling. Artillery and mortar effects were amazing. Only sporadic fire greeted Company C during its drive to the top of the mountain. All resistance was smashed before it could be effectively organized and in a matter of minutes the entire garrison had been wiped out. With this high ground in 130th Infantry hands Aringay was secure.

Next step on the regimental agenda was the seizure of Bauang, key road junction and vital intermediary point along the enemy supply and communications line running from San Fernando to Baguio. Like

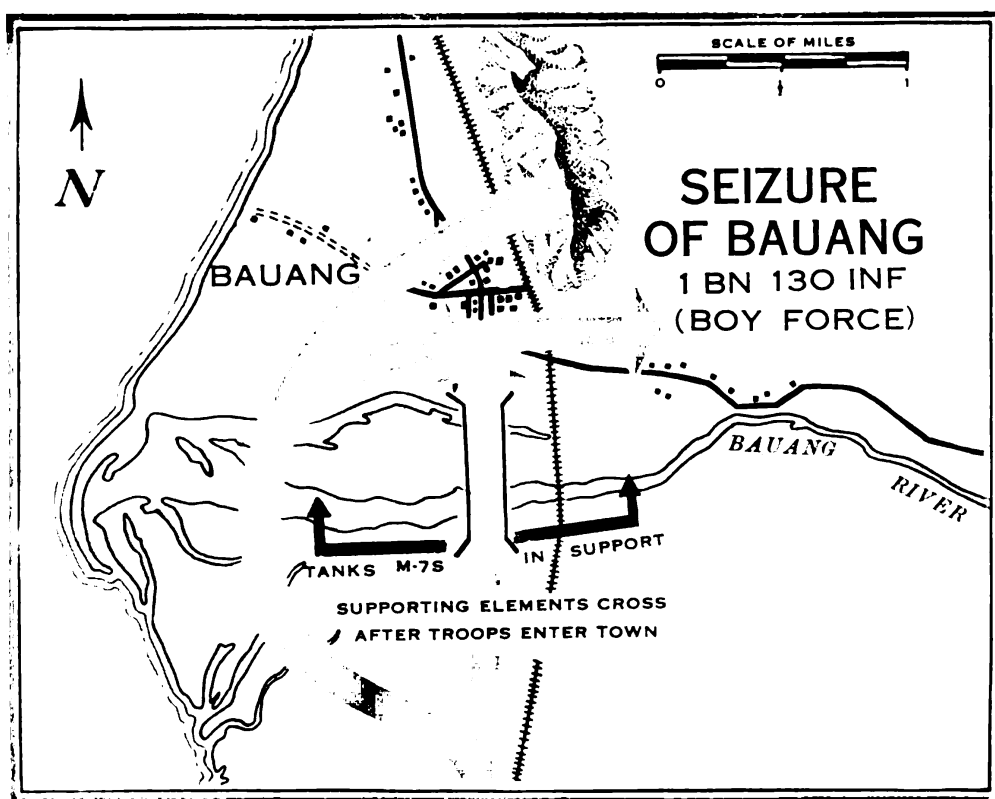
Aringay, the small *barrio* of Bauang was situated on the northern bank of a river. It too had a large highway bridge leading into the heart of town. Actually, the Bauang bridge was two separate bridges joined by a short causeway. Each section was constructed of eight concrete-and-steel spans. The overall length of the structure was 1,790 feet. In planning for the capture of Bauang the same problem faced the regimental commander that had confronted him at Aringay: seize the bridge intact.

While the 130th waited for the word to move on Bauang, two events of great consequence highlighted the slack period. One was the start of construction on a road from Caba, two miles north of Aringay, east to Galiano where the cobblestoned Asin road to Baguio had its beginning. Opening a possible new route to the summer capital became Gay Force's major accomplishment. Fifteen days after the engineer bulldozers left Caba the thirteen-mile mountain road was completed. The 1st Battalion, 123d Infantry, was quickly committed at Galiano in an effort to develop this avenue of approach to Baguio.

Another important occurrence was the establishment of liaison between the 130th and Volckmann's guerrillas. On 15 March, Antitank Company's CO, Capt. Leonard Beechinor, volunteered to slip around the enemy forces between Aringay and San Fernando via sailboat and establish physical contact with Volckmann's headquarters. Colonel Collins listened to Beechinor's plan and then granted him permission to make the attempt. Placing his faith in a lone Filipino familiar with the terrain around San Fernando, Beechinor and his guide struck out for the guerrilla zone of operations.

For eight hours the two men piloted their small vessel along the Northern Luzon shoreline, skirting several enemy installations along the beach. Finally they sighted San Juan harbor, twenty miles north of Aringay and adjacent to San Fernando. Beechinor brought the abbreviated craft into shore. Filipino guerrillas who had secured the town several days before were not hard to find, and, after making proper identification, Captain Beechinor was escorted to Colonel Volckmann's CP. This courageous trip by Beechinor allowed establishment of close radio liaison between the 130th Infantry and Northern Luzon guerrilla forces. It resulted in a bloodless junction five days later.

Since the 130th Infantry was well out ahead of other Division elements and extremely vulnerable in the event of an enemy counterattack, Corps was reluctant to flash a green light until further intelligence data on Bauang were amassed. These few days of grace permitted 130th planners to schedule an attack which followed the precepts of ground



Map 15

combat prescribed in the field manuals. Numerous reconnaissance patrols scoured the roadway leading into the Bauang bridge. OPs were established to watch for Jap movement around the *barrio* while additional patrols actually crossed the Bauang River at several points to determine its fordability and the hours when the tide was lowest.

Reconnaissance operations produced the required information. Attached guerrillas reported that Bauang was heavily garrisoned by the enemy. Elements of the 378th Independent Infantry Brigade were scattered throughout the town and its environs. Also identified as being active in the locality was the Hayasaki Detachment. These units had previously occupied Aringay, but evacuated their installations there just before the Blackhawk attack, obviously choosing to make a defensive stand at Bauang. OP personnel notified regiment that a 24-hour guard was maintained on the Bauang side of the bridge. Japs there were under orders to touch off previously planted demolitions in the event that the 130th Infantry attempted a bridge crossing.

Here too was a mission which could be accomplished only under cover of darkness.

Again, the 1st Battalion was selected to carry the ball on Phase Two of the end run. Another task force was organized consisting of the

entire 1st Battalion; Cannon Company; one platoon from the Recon Troop; a platoon of tanks from Company B, 775th Tank Battalion; and the same engineer units that had so expertly checked the Aringay bridge. Supporting fires were to be plentiful. In addition to 130th RCT artillery—Lt. Colonel Carlson's 124th Field Artillery—the task force was backed up by a squadron of P-51 fighters and a Navy destroyer cruising two thousand yards off Bauang. This multitude of units was called Boy Force, commanded by Lt. Colonel Jessup.

Before the attack order was issued ground commanders made several aerial observation flights. Lts. Ellis A. Pickett and Frederick G. Hoffmann, veteran Piper Cub pilots, alternated in flying Jessup, Talbott and Colonel Collins over the prospective battleground. Lt. Colonel Jessup had this to say after his first air reconnaissance: "Hoffmann came up to Aringay to pick me up. With no suitable landing strip close by, he just parked the plane on a sweeping curve of the concrete highway right outside of Aringay. When we looked over the bridge, Hoffmann did everything but fly under the thing. It was fairly simple to pick out trouble points around the town."

All arrangements were completed on the afternoon of 19 March, and late that night Boy Force trucked to an assembly area about 1,500 yards south of the bridge. As the force counted greatly on the factor of surprise, too large a group could not be initially committed against the objective. In accordance with the plan it was decided to send the engineers across the bridge, supported by Cannon Company, Recon and the M-7s, while Able, Baker and Charley Companies swung off to the west, forded the river near its mouth and then cut back toward Bauang proper. The two efforts were coordinated so that the bridge crossing and the flanking attack would coincide.

It was 0230 when the engineer detachment neared the southern entrance to the bridge. Attached weapons following in their wake silently veered off to both sides of the bridge. As the reconnaissance team prepared to search the structure, the 2d Platoon of Company B, 108th Engineers, deployed at the bridge entrance, ready to provide covering small-arms fire. Behind them, riflemen of the 1st Battalion had already begun the flanking maneuver. The tomblike silence served as a tonic to the troops for they knew that as long as there was no shooting the enemy was unconscious of their presence.

At 0430 the engineers cautiously moved onto the first section of the bridge, probing and listening for demolitions and mines. The span was clear. Next came the paved causeway which the engineers also negotiated without alerting the enemy. When they hit the second span





*Naguilan Airfield, seized by the 2d Battalion, 130th Infantry, as a wind-up to the "end-run"*





*Engineers found this sign on the north end of the Bauang bridge*

a few men stopped and worked feverishly to dislodge a 250-pound aerial bomb which was found strapped on the underside of a steel girder. With a noisy splash the projectile hurtled into the river below. The engineers crouched and waited, fearful that the sound of the bomb striking the water might have aroused the Japanese.

Still no enemy reaction. A hand signal was given, barely visible in the pre-dawn gloom, and the reconnaissance team resumed its advance across the bridge. A few feet farther on they discovered another bomb. Again willing hands disarmed the electrical connections and this bomb too fell harmlessly into the river. Now the engineers did not pause to see if they had been detected. Turning around, the handful of men raced for their line at the bridge entrance.

Suddenly out of the night a hail of machine-gun fire raked the bridge. One engineer fell dead while two others were hit. The Japan-



*Cannon Company and Company F on the march from Bauang to Naguilian*

ese, after minutes of debate, had finally decided to open up. When the first shot split the night, the Baker Company engineer platoon at the bridge entrance retaliated with M-1 and BAR fire. Under this covering volley the reconnaissance team was able to withdraw from the bridge with its casualties.

During this exchange of small-arms fire the flanking companies reported by radio that they were in position to storm the town. Quickly, Lt. Colonel Jessup gave them his approval, at the same time directing the engineers to push across the bridge. Aided by the paralyzing attack driven against the enemy flank, the engineers were able to cross without sustaining additional casualties. They linked up with the infantry at the far entrance to the bridge. Bauang was overrun by dawn. Only east of the *barrio* did the Japanese offer stiff resistance. Firmly entrenched in a labyrinth of caves on high ground they elected to fight to the last man.

Due to the time spent in preparation, the seizure of Bauang went off as smoothly as if it had been a maneuver. Every man knew his own particular task and performed it well. The expected resistance did not materialize for two reasons. First, guerrillas had overestimated the number of Japanese in the town. Secondly, Volckmann's Filipino force had exerted strong pressure from the north, causing large numbers of the enemy to abandon Bauang and move inland toward Baguio.

General Clarkson and Colonel Collins both barely escaped death during the mop-up around Bauang. The Division Commander, anxious to observe this vital phase in the Division's drive on Baguio, crossed the bridge with Colonel Collins scarcely twenty minutes after its seizure. Once in the city they followed the advances right up to the caves east of Bauang. While they watched the gradual reduction of this strongpoint, a lone Jap straggler, supposedly dead, suddenly sprang from the interior of a cave directly behind General Clarkson and the colonel. The click of his rifle bolt was the only thing that gave him away as he tried to bring down the Division Commander with a bullet in the back.

Quick thinking on the part of Pfc. Frank Gillespie, Colonel Collins' bodyguard, saved the lives of the two officers. Standing a few paces from "The Ripper," Gillespie whirled around at the sound of the Arisaka bolt, unlimbered his submachine gun and cut the Nip down with one burst. A grateful General Clarkson promoted him on the spot. Gillespie was later awarded the Silver Star for this and numerous other actions involving the safety of his regimental commander.

By noon the small hills east of Bauang had been taken. The essential

Japanese line of communication and supply from Baguio to San Fernando was slashed since the Golden Cross had complete control of Bauang. For all practical purposes enemy remnants who had escaped slaughter at Bauang and San Fernando were isolated. Six short miles now separated Volckmann's gallant guerrillas and the 130th Infantry. On 20 March the 130th's energetic leader personally led an infantry-tank force over the debris-littered highway into San Fernando. Guerrillas received the column with shouts of joy. For them, the Blackhawks represented the first American soldiers they had seen since the fall of the Philippines in 1942.

During the night of 20 March a battalion of reorganized enemy remnants, ignorant of the fact that passage on the road was denied them, attempted to follow the San Fernando-Bauang-Baguio highway into the summer capital. They provided a field day for 1st Battalion roadblocks set up north of Bauang. As the Japanese casually strolled down the road in a closely bunched column, 130th Infantry machine guns suddenly cut loose, mowing down the enemy by scores. The few who escaped these fires dropped their equipment and fled for the hills in panic. At the crack of dawn combat patrols took up the pursuit. Three days of this activity accounted for more than two hundred Nips.

Anxious to pursue every advantage, Colonel Collins ordered a reconnaissance in force from Bauang to Naguilian where a small party of Japanese guarded Naguilian Airfield. Major Barry A. Ryan, executive officer of the 2d Battalion, was placed in command of this force, made up of Fox Company motorized, a platoon of tanks, and the fast Recon Troop scout cars. Three hours after he left Bauang on the morning of 21 March Major Ryan radioed "The Ripper" that Naguilian and the airfield had both been secured against light enemy resistance. Engineers immediately took over the strip and in a few hours Naguilian Airfield was receiving Division Artillery L-4s.

So wound up the end run. The 130th lost but four killed and thirteen wounded in the ten-day Bauang-Naguilian sweep; counted enemy dead totalled 306. Revenge was sweet to the Blackhawks who still remembered the exhausting, oppressive days around Rosario and Cauringan when well concealed Japs on high ground picked them off mercilessly. On open ground members of the 130th missed no chance to harass and kill. With their footing secure, the terrain familiar and with superior weapons augmenting their thrust for vengeance, the Blackhawks more than made up for the tortures of their first combat days on Luzon.



## *Chapter II: Galiano and the Asin Tunnels*

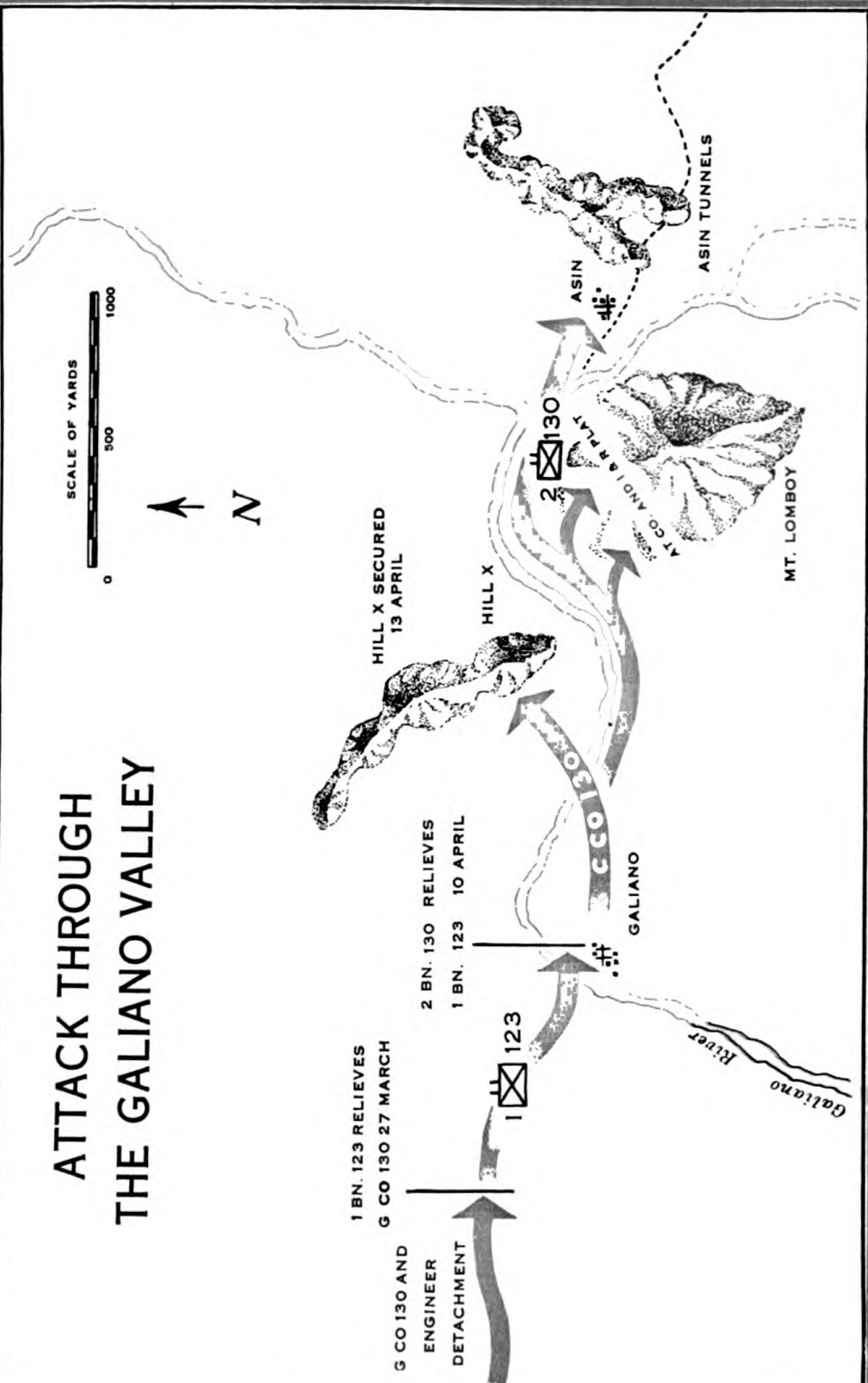
GENERAL Krueger, Sixth Army commander, was pleased with the result of the 130th's northward dash along the Luzon coast. A single infantry battalion, making a reconnaissance in force, had effected the long-sought junction with Colonel Volckmann's Northern Luzon guerrillas. Capture of the Aringay and Bauang bridges had consolidated lines of supply and communication between Army headquarters and its most forward elements. From a strategic standpoint—with most of western Luzon in Sixth Army hands—the time was opportune to mount a drive through the mountains to Yamashita's Baguio citadel.

Corps considerably swelled the combat effectiveness of the Division in late March by attaching the 129th Infantry of the crack 37th Division to the Golden Cross. Fresh from victories along the Central Luzon Plain and in shattered Manila, Col. John Frederick's men checked into a Bauang assembly area at noon on 26 March. This attachment was made for two reasons: primarily because the character of enemy opposition along the approaches to Baguio was more fierce than in any Sixth Army sector; secondly, the 33d Division was attempting to roll back the enemy line with only two regiments. The pressure applied against the enemy on Kennon Road necessarily had to be continued even though terrain restrictions made it impossible to reach Baguio along this route. If the 136th removed this pressure which was keeping hundreds of Nips occupied, the enemy would be free to re-group his forces in answer to the new threat from the west.

Troops of the Golden Cross were happy to welcome the 129th back into the fold. Three years before, this colorful Illinois regiment, complemented by the 130th and 136th Infantry Regiments, had composed a third of the Division's infantry strength. In July 1942, the 2d and 3d Battalions of the 129th left Camp Forrest and headed for the San Francisco Port of Embarkation. The remaining battalion was employed as the nucleus around which the 123d Infantry was built when it was activated in October 1942. Since going overseas, a reconstructed 129th had piled up an enviable combat record highlighted by bloody campaigning on Bougainville. The remainder of the 37th Division remained in Manila for rest and rehabilitation.

With four regiments committed to the fight for Baguio, higher headquarters readily lifted the mission outside the category of feints and reconnaissances in force. Corps advised General Clarkson that the signal to inaugurate an all-out climax push against the Philippine summer capital would be flashed at any moment. Heavily reinforced by troops and guns, the Golden Cross waited for orders to advance.

# ATTACK THROUGH THE GALIANO VALLEY



Map 16

But this set-up, whereby the 33d had more in the way of men and weapons than ever before, was destined to be short-lived. In other parts of the Corps sector reinforcements were also desperately required. The 32d (Red Arrow) Division, with the vital mission of smashing through the Japs along the Villa Verde Trail, was locked in a costly impasse with the enemy. With Corps it necessarily became a case of robbing Peter to pay Paul. Unhappily, the Golden Cross was forced into the Peter role.

The 129th went into the line. The 130th came out. No sooner had this relief been effected, on 28 March near Burgos along the Naguilian-Baguio Road, than two battalions of Blackhawks mounted trucks at Aringay for the long haul to the Tebbo area where they in turn took over the positions of two 32d Division battalions. Red Arrow troops were immediately committed along the Villa Verde, a rough jeep trail running through the mountains up the center of Northern Luzon. The Blackhawk move stretched the Division line from Aringay to Tebbo, an airline distance of sixty-five miles.

To complete this Corps-wide shuffling of troops, the 1st Battalion, 123d Infantry, commanded by Lt. Colonel Coates, moved up the engineer-dozed Caba-Galiano road. At the Galiano terminus, these 123d doughs relieved Company G, 130th Infantry, which had been in this area for several days acting as security for the engineer construction force.

With Golden Cross troops spread over half of Northern Luzon, I Corps came out with a field order directing an advance all along its front.

Colonel Cavenee's men redoubled their efforts to drive the Nips back on Kennon Road. The 129th swept forward from Burgos and proceeded to hack its way forward over Highway 9. The Jap reacted violently all along the line.

Lieutenant Colonel Coates' battalion ran into a tartar. Galiano—where his battalion had entered the line—is a small power-plant town nestling deep in the Asin Valley. Two huge mountains flank the small *barrio*: Mount Bilbil on the north, and Mount Lomboy in the opposite direction. The 1st Battalion, with the mission of driving northeast to Asin, sought to weave between these bulwarks. The Jap, able to observe the daily progress of road construction as the engineers neared Galiano, had developed both Bilbil and Lomboy into powerful hill fortresses. These key positions were all-important in his plan of mountain defense. Not only did they look down directly upon the



*Huge Bilbil commands Galiano Valley*

valley, but they also outposted his main line of resistance concentrated two miles away in the steep areas surrounding the Asin tunnels.

Enemy troops located on these twin strongpoints smashed every attempt on the battalion's part to advance through the valley. Mountain artillery pieces and heavy mortars ceaselessly pounded all battalion positions, raking the unit from front line to CP. After a few days of relentless shelling, it soon became obvious, even to the most optimistic, that the battalion could not gain an inch.

Switching tactics on the order of their regimental commander, the 123d doughs decided to try and knock the Japs off Hill X, a long knob running down the southern slope of Bilbil and separated into two parts by a thin razor-back ridge. But here, too, the battalion's assaulting elements were stopped cold.

Mile-long Bilbil was formidably fortified by the enemy. Particularly so was Hill X. Seven times the 1st Battalion attempted to scale the heights of Hill X, but on each occasion they were pin-pointed on the exposed razorback halfway up the hill and cut down with small-arms, mortar and artillery fire.

After their final failure to take the hill, it became evident that a

fresh, rested force was needed to assault the enemy defensive set-up. Other battalions of the 123d were unable to render assistance to the exhausted troops of the 1st Battalion. Lt. Colonel Hilton and Major Sanford I. Wolff, commanding the 2d and 3d Battalions, were encountering bitter opposition in the advance from Pugo toward Baguio.

Meanwhile, on the opposite flank of the Division, the 130th Infantry noted scant enemy activity in the Tebbo sector. General Clarkson, anxious to bolster his four-pronged pincer movement on Baguio, issued orders to the 2d Battalion, 136th Infantry, then in Division reserve near Sison, directing it to relieve the 130th at Tebbo. By night-fall on 9 April the relief was completed. The following morning, the 2d Battalion, 130th Infantry—fresh compared to Lt. Colonel Coates' battered men—took over in the Galiano sector. Major Richard Askren was in command.

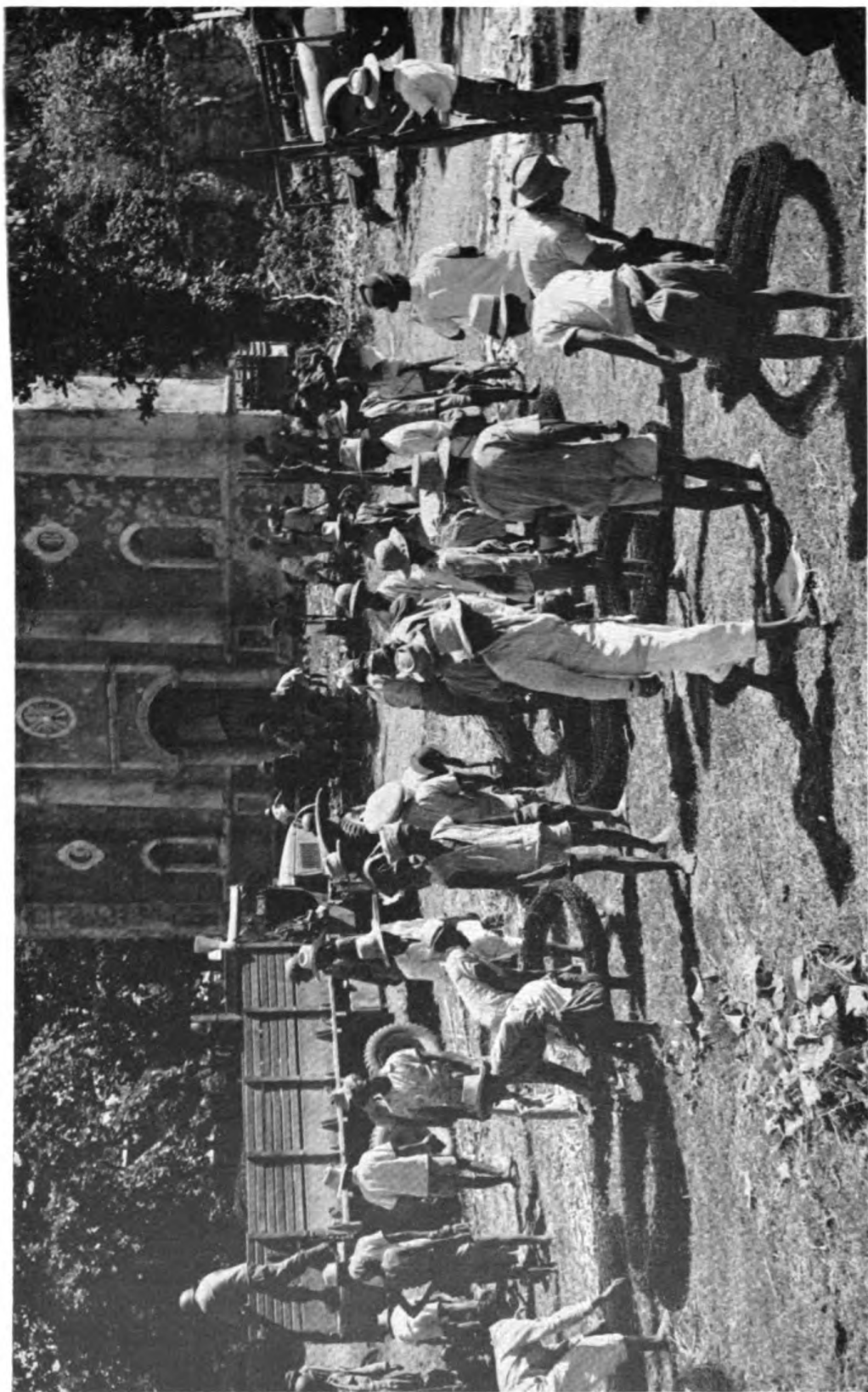
Remaining elements of the 37th Division arrived at Bauang the same day. Anxious to throw two full-force drives against Baguio, Corps released the 129th Infantry from its Golden Cross attachment and separated the area into two sections, giving one each to the 33d and 37th. General Beightler assumed responsibility for the Naguilian-Baguio road and all terrain to the north, while General Clarkson was ordered to confine 33d Division activities to the area south of the highway.

After a look at Bilbil and Lomboy, Blackhawk troops girded themselves for days of brutal campaigning. One glimpse at the haggard faces of the 123d troops going to the rear told them that the enemy on Hill X was prepared to hold out until the last man had been killed. Hill X was garrisoned by elements of the Jap 58th Independent Mixed Brigade. The Blackhawks had met them before. Cunning fighters who asked no quarter and gave none, the 58th IMB was one of Yamashita's prides.

No sooner was the orientation following the relief completed than Blackhawk patrols moved forward, aggressively sawing away at the enemy's defensive alignment in search of a weak link possibly overlooked by the 123d. They found none. There still remained only one way to get at the Jap—the same barren route of advance up Hill X taken by the 123d Infantry in their fruitless smashes.

Major Askren decided to gamble on a bold move. He sent for Capt. William F. Dellinger, Fox Company commander, and outlined an audacious plan of attacking the Hill X garrison without benefit of any preparatory fires. Major Askren based his entire plan on the element of surprise, speculating that his troops could at least secure a foothold





*Carriers at Bauang load barbed wire for troops fighting through the Galtano Valley*

on the hill before the enemy fully realized what was happening. Captain Dellinger returned to his CP and briefed his troops. Jump-off time was set for 0900 on 11 April.

Everything came off according to plan. The Jap was hit suddenly and hard. And, as hoped for, he folded in the moment of crisis. Until the forward wave of riflemen swarmed over the crest of the hill and blasted their positions with grenades and small-arms fire, the Jap soldiers had no inkling that such an assault was even under way. Bewildered by this startling turn of events, they rapidly pulled out of their fire-swept emplacements and raced up the mountainside toward the main force entrenched on top of Bilbil.

But cooler heads prevailed among the Japanese. Before Fox Company could consolidate its gains and secure favorable fields of fire ranging toward the enemy, the Nips counterattacked.

Backed up by the heavy artillery and mortars on Bilbil, the enemy reorganized on the tree-dotted slopes of the hill and charged down toward Captain Dellinger's doughs. Desperately, Fox Company shifted fires in a determined effort to protect this vital gain they had engineered. But the enemy, screaming "*Banzai!*" along with vile American epithets, was able to throw plunging rifle and machine-gun fire into their old foxholes. Slowly they gained fire superiority. The crusher was applied a few moments later when Nip mountain guns and mortars slammed shells into the company.

Slowly the Japs got a frontal and flanking attack under way and assaulted their former positions. Fox Company beat them back repeatedly, but accelerated mortar fires from Bilbil soon made the ground untenable. Carrying its dead and wounded, Company F was forced to withdraw.

Remembering the fate of the 123d Infantry, which had absorbed seven beatings such as Fox Company's, Colonel Collins took personal command. His regiment had been given the mission of taking Asin and attacking toward Baguio as soon as possible. The CO quickly realized that he could not hope to take both Bilbil and Lomboy and still maintain a sustained advance against Asin, where the enemy was reportedly stronger than at Galiano. His job now was not necessarily to clear Bilbil and Lomboy, although that was naturally desirable. He had to keep advancing above everything else.

Colonel Collins formulated a plan whereby small elements of his regiment would contain these strongpoints while the remainder of his force took advantage of the diversion to move up the valley. The 1st Battalion was handed the job of knocking out X and neutralizing Bilbil,

while Major Askren's troops were to carry out the principal part of the mission by heading for Asin.

Most of the 1st Battalion was at this time engaged in protecting supply installations located near Galiano. It was a distasteful assignment. The power-plant *barrio* was under daily artillery fire from 75s on Bilbil. Technically "rear area," Galiano was anything but a sanctuary for the weary. In many respects it was just as hot as Bilbil. The story of a Baker Company patrol well illustrates that fact.

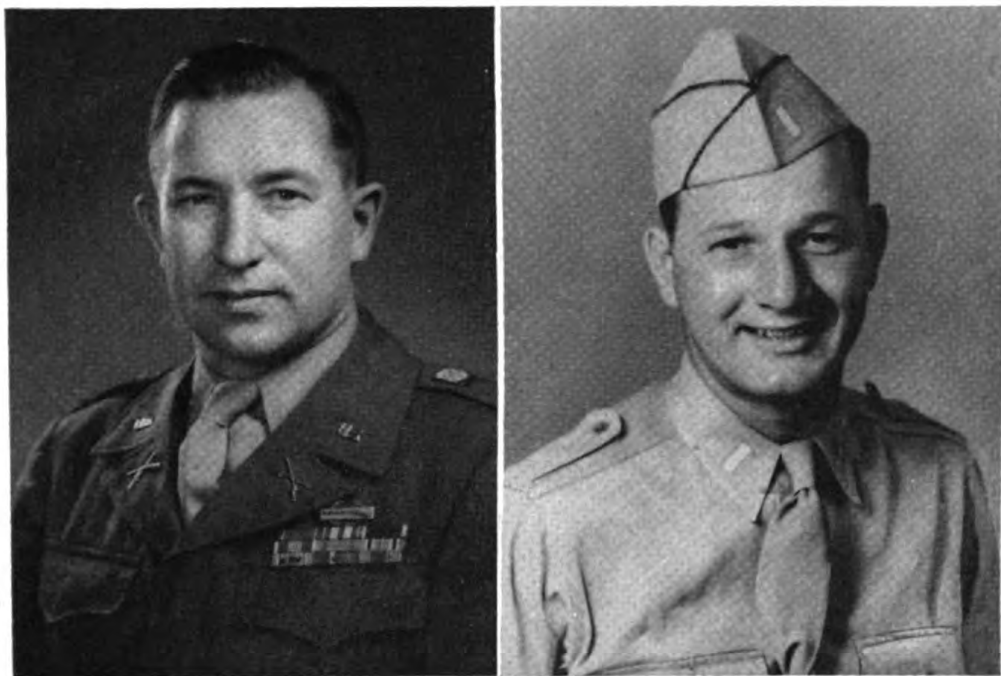
This patrol, composed of the company's 2d Platoon, had just completed a routine security check along the battalion's left flank. While moving down the valley road to their bivouac area, they were suddenly hit by a barrage of HE shells. At the same time, a small raiding party of Nips who had infiltrated around the battalion, caught the patrol in a blast of machine-gun fire. Only the self-sacrifice of a single man enabled the platoon to escape annihilation. He was Pfc. Doneivon L. Weeks, first scout.

Weeks took the first burst in both legs and went down. Immediately shouting to his men to seek cover alongside the road, the crippled scout took a grenade from his shoulder harness and painfully dragged himself toward the Japs, leaving a trail of blood in his wake. Unable to resist this helpless target, the enemy brought all of their guns down on Private First Class Weeks, killing him instantly. But the rest of the platoon, prone in the small grooves lining the road, was able to pinpoint the Nip infiltrators. They maneuvered a double envelopment around the Japs and wiped out the raiding party. Private First Class Weeks earned a posthumous award of the DSC.

Actions such as this made it imperative to keep two rifle companies near Galiano. Infiltrations were frequent. Only Charley Company could be spared for the attack on Hill X.

The night of 11-12 April was spent plastering Japanese positions on Hill X with an assortment of high explosives. From 1800 to 0600 the howitzers of the 124th Field Artillery kept up a steady pounding. Early the next morning, Captain Kelly's company moved out in the attack. This time, however, the Jap was not caught half asleep. He knew what was coming long before Charley Company's lead scouts began their painful ascent up the steep slope.

Six machine guns, with clear fields of fire, spat out copper-coated greetings as soon as the Blackhawk doughs hove into sight. Mortars and the artillery section on Bilbil—the same weapons that had ripped Fox Company and the 123d—quickly joined the machine-gun chatter and effectively covered routes of advance. Casualties ran discouragingly



*Lieutenant Colonel Ernest D. Jessup and Captain Patrick Kelly*

high, but Charley Company continued to push into this merciless hail of bullets and shell fragments. Every yard taken came harder than the preceding one. It was simply a case of men against fire and the fire finally prevailed.

Kelly was forced to halt the drive. Progress at this expensive price meant that there would not be enough riflemen to mount an assault even if the enemy fire lanes were traversed. Word went out to the platoons: reorganize and dig in.

Still displaying the tactical know-how and esprit that made it one of the finest units in the Division, the company quickly consolidated its gains. Half of the force threw voluminous fire against the Nips while the remainder dug in. As soon as their slit trenches were dug, the men in holes became the base of fire. In this fashion the entire company was able to gain protection. No additional casualties resulted during this procedure.

Battered as it was, Charley had the foothold that the 123d and Fox Company had both failed to secure. But the razor-back entrance of Hill X still lay ahead. The enemy, obviously under orders to hold at all costs, did not leave his positions during the hours of darkness and the company spent a quiet night on the slope of Hill X.

At dawn the attack was resumed. It assumed its former proportion of ferocity the moment the scouts moved out. Again the enemy doused the hillside with every type of fire at his command. Again the com-

pany had to wade through fire in order to gain ground. Moving slowly, Captain Kelly and his men fought their way up to the razor-back. The enemy immediately shifted some of his fires from the men onto the narrow ridge. Bullets could be seen snapping into every yard of its top and sides. It looked at this point as though Hill X completely defied assault.

But the actions of one man broke the stalemate. That man was Pfc. Dexter J. Kerstetter, a lead scout with the 3d Platoon who had spent the first two months of the Luzon campaign as a cook's helper in the company mess. Shortly before entering the Galiano sector, the company strength was depleted to seventy men. Realizing the need for manpower where it would do the most good, the 37-year old Washingtonian gladly swapped his field stove for an M-1.

Well ahead of his squad, which was in the forefront of the attack, Kerstetter was the first man to approach the razor-back. Lt. George W. Campbell, his platoon leader, takes the story from here:

Without hesitating a moment, Kerstetter walked that open ridge. Blasting away with his rifle he forced the Japs covering the ridge to head for cover and then he used rifle grenades on their hiding places. He left the trail across the razor-back near its far end and dropped down among four Japs who were in a cave carved out of the cliffside. Firing from the hip as he struggled for a foothold, Kerstetter killed all four and continued on through the fire along the ridge.

Directly ahead of him a heavy machine gun was set up to cover the trail. By himself he charged the gun, killing the crew of four as he closed in. He calmly put another rifle grenade on the end of his M-1 and lobbed it into the position. By this time twenty Japs were moving back into positions covering the ridge and he used the last of his ammunition and grenades to scatter them. He came back to replenish his ammo supply and I saw his hand had been badly burned by contact with his hot rifle barrel. Kerstetter refused to pause for first aid and returned to the ridge where the rest of the company was engaged in capitalizing on the salient he had forced.

Inspired by this display of courage, all platoons of Charley Company raced across the ridge and charged into the enemy stronghold. Pfc. Joseph Papez, Jr. rushed a pair of mutually supporting Nambus and wiped out both weapons and crews as Nip grenades exploded around him. Keyed to a white-hot fighting pitch, Captain Kelly's troops blasted every emplacement and pumped bullets into every Jap with a breath of life remaining in him.

In a few moments this pent-up fury abated. All that remained on the hill was Charley Company, a thin haze of smoke, the acrid smell





*Sergeant Dexter J. Kerstetter receives the Medal of Honor from President Harry S. Truman*

of cordite, and fifty-seven dead Japanese. Of the fifty-seven, Kerstetter accounted for sixteen and Papez for five.

For his intrepidity, Pfc. Dexter J. Kerstetter was presented with the Medal of Honor by President Harry S. Truman in a ceremony staged on the White House lawn in September 1945. Papez got the DSC. To the company went the Nation's highest award to a combat unit—the Distinguished Unit Citation.

Nips on Bilbil counterattacked Captain Kelly's doughs for three solid days and nights but the company held fast even though casualties had cut them down to less than half strength. Ironically, among the wounded was Kerstetter, hit in the leg by a sniper's bullet. But the entire purpose of the attack against Hill X had been achieved. On the first day of the fight, when the Nips were throwing everything they had against Charley Company, the 2d Battalion took advantage of the diversion and drove through the valley to Asin.

On both Bilbil and Lomboy the enemy continued to hold the dominating terrain, but with Blackhawks on Hill X the Bilbil Nips were virtually isolated. With the hill in Golden Cross hands, the Japs would first have to retake Hill X before they would be able to sweep down the slope into the valley where the war was currently passing them by.

In accordance with "The Ripper's" plan to contain the Japs on Lomboy in the same manner as those on Bilbil, a provisional force composed of the I & R Platoon and Antitank Company seized a position halfway up the steep side of the mountain but directly between the Japs and the valley below. Again, Blackhawks could prevent the Japs from harassing and raiding vital lines of supply, communication and evacuation. This action freed most of the 130th's footsloggers for the strike against the Jap main line of resistance near Asin.

Only small pockets of enemy contested the 2d Battalion's entry into Asin, and elements of the battalion were able to maneuver around these defenders. By pinching these pockets between frontal and flanking moves, the Blackhawks were able to wipe out all opposition, and Major Askren had a CP set up in Asin by nightfall of 12 April.

Early the next morning combat patrols from the rifle companies, led by Lts. James Huckaby, George Proudfoot, Douglas M. Hylton, and James L. Fleming, moved toward the towering ridgeline east of Asin. These first patrols were all administered a severe taste of the character of the Japanese defense. All returned to headquarters with identical stories. The Jap had all approaches covered with an abundance of automatic weapons. He let you get in close, and just when you thought you had him, he opened up.



**Senior commanders of American forces driving toward Baguio: Major General Robert S. Beightler, CG, 37th Division; Major General Innis P. Smith, in command of I Corps; and General Clarkson.**

Without doubt, this was the line selected by the Nips to halt the regimental advance.

From these early skirmishes, Colonel Collins and his staff were able to estimate correctly the enemy's capabilities and his tactical attitude. Since the Blackhawk entry into Asin, the Jap confined his counter-activity to harassing mortar and artillery fire. Gone were his raiding parties and fanatical *Banzai* attacks.

The obvious deduction was that the enemy chose to husband his forces until the regiment actually attacked his positions. With Baguio a few scant miles behind him he could not afford to deplete his ranks

with the senseless counterattacks characteristic of his fighting in the earlier days of the Pacific War. If he could hold east of Asin, the drive up the valley would have necessarily gone for naught. In effect then, his feelings could be summed up in four words: "Come and get me!"

Everything favored him: terrain, lines of supply, location of supporting weapons. The Asin Valley here was more a gorge than a valley. Nowhere was it more than a hundred yards wide. The large ridge to the east, so ferociously defended by the Nips, could not be negotiated unless men pulled themselves up its sides, using small limbs and bushes as handholds. The vegetation on the hillside was exceedingly thick and visibility was limited to a maximum of six or seven yards.

Carved into the southern tip of this 2,000-foot-high ridge which ran north and south between the Naguilian road and the Asin road, were two tunnels about five hundred yards long and eight hundred yards apart. The 130th Infantry was charged with the seizure of the ridge and the two tunnels, known as the Asin tunnels.

Patrols continued to search the ridge. However, they turned out to be expensive affairs as even the smallest ones generally returned to their bases with casualties. The Aringay-Bauang open-ground "rabbit-hunt" days were ended. At Asin patrols paid dearly for just a glimpse of their objective. What would happen when the Blackhawks finally attacked?

A prisoner taken by one of the first combat patrols substantiated "The Ripper's" belief that the enemy garrison was a large one composed of crack troops. This Jap volunteered the information that a battalion of the 75th Infantry Regiment had been sent down from Baguio on 13 April to reinforce Asin after Jap commanders realized that Bilbil and Lomboy had failed to halt the 130th's drive.

Anxious to maintain the initiative and to keep fresh troops at the most forward positions, Colonel Collins brought up Lt. Colonel Minton's rested 3d Battalion from Division reserve at Aringay. It relieved the 2d Battalion on 14 April. "The Ripper" did not intend that this drive should fail.

Lt. Colonel Minton's men spent the remainder of the 14th and all of the 15th acquainting themselves with the country around Asin. Still seeking to keep the enemy off balance with continuous ground pressure against his installations, regimental headquarters ordered the 3d Battalion to initiate an attack against the ridge.

A long spur leading to the main ridge housing the tunnels was selected as the first objective. With this spur in the battalion's hands, the outer line of the enemy defense could be punctured. King Company was handed first crack at the Jap's Asin line. The Distinguished Unit

Citation winners from Bench Mark, still led by Captain Hicks, were briefed for an attack to be made on the morning of 16 April.

Further reconnaissance determined that capture of the spur might possibly split the Jap line. If a wedge could be driven into the Japanese positions at the point where the spur made a junction with the main ridge, it would then be possible to drive both north and south from the salient.

King Company jumped off on schedule. The approach march, up terrain so steep that forward progress was limited to a few hundred yards an hour, passed without incident. Slowly the company beat its way toward the objective, looking like an oversize snake unwinding itself on the slope. Captain Hicks wondered at the absolute lack of opposition. Lead scouts reported back that they could see the crest of the spur. Still not a sign of resistance. The scouts continued to edge forward.

Fifty, forty, and then twenty yards separated the lead platoon from the objective. The only sound to be heard was the panting of the King Company doughs fighting their way uphill. A few seconds later, with the lead scout only five yards shy of the objective, the enemy acted.

Ten machine guns covering King Company's front and flanks suddenly opened up in a full-throated roar. Surprised doughs stood transfixed with shock for a fleeting moment and then dove for cover. They could do nothing to combat this overpowering deluge of fire. Every attempt to move was met with point-blank fire. In the first fusillade more than twenty men were hit. Again the Jap had paused until the Blackhawks had walked into his muzzles before cutting loose.

Captain Hicks had but one choice: break contact and pull out.

But the enemy intended to forestall this move too. Taking advantage of the shock created by the tremendous volume of surprise fire, a platoon of Nip riflemen quickly raced down the two draws flanking the company and converged on King's exposed rear. More men went down before the company commander was able to muster what strength remained and direct a breakthrough. Fighting for their lives, Company K doughboys overran this enemy platoon hacking at their rear, and withdrew down the ridge.

In a fire fight lasting only a few minutes, the company lost almost half its strength in killed or wounded. Regiment and Division, in constant communication with the 3d Battalion CP, knew even before Hicks returned with his thirty casualties that further efforts along this route would prove equally destructive.

Patrol actions along other probable routes of approach met the same



fate. While Captain Hicks and King Company were fighting to break out of the Jap ambush, a combat patrol from Item Company was caught in a similar situation. Led by T/Sgt. Paul D. Sterling, an Illinois Guardsman who had been with Item Company for more than four years, this platoon-sized unit had the mission of checking trails and enemy defenses in the area close to the tunnels.

Again the Japs held their fire until the Item troops were practically walking up their Nambu sights. Concealed by huge clumps of thick *cogon* grass, the enemy suddenly blasted the platoon as Sergeant Sterling led it across a patch of open ground near the Japanese position. While the first bursts of fire were shredding his outfit, Sergeant Sterling went into action. Seeing the muzzle of a machine gun which had the unit enfiladed, the sergeant pulled the pin from a fragmentation grenade and charged the emplacement. Miraculously he reached it unharmed. He followed one grenade with another and the gun was destroyed.

There remained two Nambus which kept the platoon locked inside the ambush by short-range flanking fire. Sergeant Sterling, instead of seeking cover, heroically exposed himself to the fires of the flanking guns, in the hope that his men would be able to spot the pieces and neutralize them. Both guns turned their fires on him and he fell, mortally wounded. But his plan worked. The platoon split into two sections and enveloped both guns as the Japs swung their fires upon the sergeant.

Sergeant Sterling's sacrifice enabled the platoon to break contact and continue on its mission without additional casualties. He was posthumously awarded the Distinguished Service Cross.

The facts were hard to swallow but at the same time childishly simple. The Japanese had the western approaches to the ridge nailed down under a curtain of steel. Like so many others, this too was destined to be a fight to the death.

"The Ripper" decided to keep infantry activity at a minimum during the next few days and plaster the enemy with artillery and air strikes. From 17 to 20 April guns of the 123d and 124th Field Artillery Battalions hurled hundreds of rounds against the ridge. Supporting P-51s flew numerous sorties in ground support and the Lingayen-based fighters augmented the artillery output with tons of HE and Napalm.

Every strike was followed by patrol activity. The Blackhawks lived in the hope that the enemy might quit under this incessant bombardment. But as each patrol was thrown back the men slowly got the idea

that the bayonet, rifle and grenade were the only weapons that could force the Nip to yield Asin.

Colonel Collins, refusing to admit defeat in the face of his regiment's superior combat record yet unwilling to waste lives in futile smashes against a well entrenched enemy, doubled his efforts to discover a less costly route from which an attack could be renewed. He made daily reconnaissance flights with Lt. William Brisley, veteran artillery liaison pilot. Meanwhile, reports reached his CP that the 129th Infantry, advancing along the Naguilian road, had bitten off huge chunks of ground and was now at a point just outside Irisan.

"The Ripper" was told of this advance at once. "Irisan," mused the CO, consulting his operations map. Irisan! Why Irisan was northwest of his objective—and a thousand feet higher!

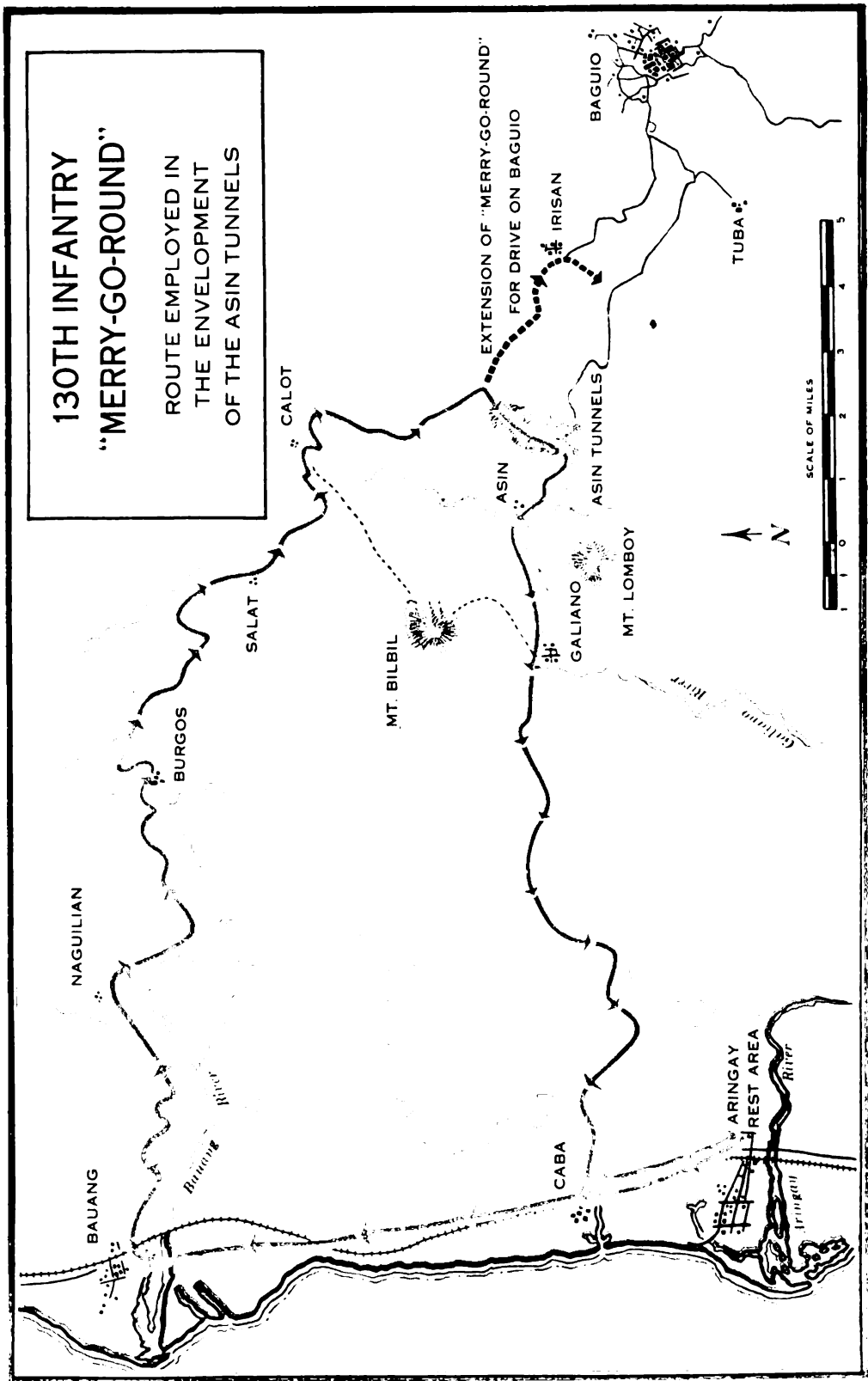
Radioing Brisley to land and pick him up, "The Ripper" again went up on aerial reconnaissance. He thought aloud as he slowly circled the enemy ridge, map in hand: "Why can't we come in behind them? Or on their right flank? What's to stop us? We can't make a yard from the west but now we've got high ground to the northeast. Why not that way?" The solution to the problem was obvious.

Soon after landing at the Cub strip, Colonel Collins sent for Lt. Colonel Jessup, commander of his workhorse 1st Battalion, and asked the stocky Kansan to go up, mull over his idea, look over the ground and then return for a comparison of notes. Two hours later the battalion commander checked into the regimental CP with a huge smile wreathing his features. "Ripper," he commented, "it can't miss. It'll be nice to be on top of them for a change."

That was all the convincing Colonel Collins needed. After action-filled days of costly stalemate, the 130th Infantry was getting another chance. If this projected drive from the north failed it looked as though VJ-day would see the Blackhawks still at Asin.

Regimental staff members spun out a scheme for the movement of troops and the subsequent attack. The finished plan was dubbed "The Blackhawk Merry-Go-Round" by the staff. It consisted of withdrawing one battalion from the Asin-Galiano area and moving it by truck to Aringay where regimental rear was set up. There mobile showers were available, company kitchens put out hot food and canvas cots were on hand. After a night's rest here, the troops were to head north to Bauang, swing east toward Naguilian and then follow the 129th's route of advance to Irisan.

Accordingly, on 19 April, under cover of darkness, Lt. Colonel Jessup's battalion, less Able Company which remained on Hill X, was



Map 17



*Troops of the 2d Battalion on the Naguilian Road await the signal to jump off against the Asin tunnels ridge*

withdrawn from its positions and moved forty-eight miles via Aringay, Bauang, Naguilian and the Baguio road. The 2d Battalion, now commanded by Major James B. Faulconer, was released from Division reserve at this point and followed behind the 1st Battalion. The 3d Battalion remained at Asin with the mission of continuing pressure from the west.

Jessup's battalion completed its truck trip without incident, immediately taking up positions on the high ground south of the highway. Dawn came and eager eyes peered through the mist in search of the objective. But—the objective was below them a thousand yards away! Below! That word danced through 1st Battalion minds even as unit commanders began to mass their supporting weapons. It tasted good in their throats. For the first time in the 130th's combat history, Blackhawks were looking down a few hundred Japanese throats.

Cannon Company rumbled up. An attached antiaircraft battalion manning multiple .50s and 40mm Bofors guns dug in their weapons and pointed toward Asin. Dog and How Companies set up heavy mortars in defilade and eight heavy machine guns were trained on the objective.

At dawn, 21 April, little more than a day after the first troops jumped on the "Blackhawk Merry-Go-Round," the 1st Battalion drove south in the attack. With Captain Brown's Baker Company spearheading the thrust, the 1st Battalion, in a column of companies, followed by the 2d Battalion, executed the most brilliant maneuver yet performed by the 130th Infantry.

Jap defenders were caught by surprise. Never expecting an attack from the north, they could bring only limited forces to bear on the advancing Blackhawks. Quickly, the forward elements of Baker Company surged forward up the main Jap ridge behind a rolling barrage of artillery, mortar and machine gun fire. Befuddled Japs could offer only token resistance as Baker Company reached a small banana grove just short of the high point on the entire ridge. Here they paused while heavy cannon and mortar fires slammed into the enemy defenses. As soon as the fires moved on, the doughs sprinted to the high point and wiped out the Nip garrison. From there the route of advance was all downhill.

But the enemy gradually recuperated from the combined effects of surprise and the devastating HE fires. Resistance became stiffer. Casualties occurred with greater frequency as the Nips effected a slow reorganization.

Lieutenant Colonel Jessup, with the forward company, took an active part in the fight, bringing supporting fires to bear on enemy strongpoints. Suddenly he fell to the grass-covered slope, hit by a burst of machine-gun fire. A Jap gunner, seeing the husky ex-wrestler adjusting howitzer fire, figured he had a prime target. Two bullets ripped through Lieutenant Colonel Jessup's chest close to the heart. He fell in an exposed position. The Jap gunner triggered another burst and 7.7mm slugs tore into the battalion commander's left arm and legs before Captain Kelly managed to crawl close enough to drag him to a covered position. Despite his wounds, Lt. Colonel Jessup continued to direct cannon fire against a small knob. The M-7s, firing on his orders and from his sensings, killed twenty-three Japs and destroyed three machine guns and four knee mortars. Several months after his evacuation to the United States, Lt. Colonel Jessup was presented with the Distinguished Service Cross for his extraordinary heroism on the Asin ridge.

Major Talbott came forward and assumed command. Continuing the attack, the 1st Battalion seized its initial objective—the first of a series of large knobs on the downgrade towards the tunnels—at 1500. Here elements of Major Faulconer's force, following the 1st Battalion advance closely, passed through Major Talbott's weary men and drove another three hundred yards before impending darkness forced them to dig in for the night.

With defeat staring him in the face, the Jap resorted to his old night infiltration tactics in an effort to push the 2d Battalion off the ridge or else kill off its personnel to a point where further advance



*A handful of Japs surrendered when the 130th Infantry converged on the tunnels.*

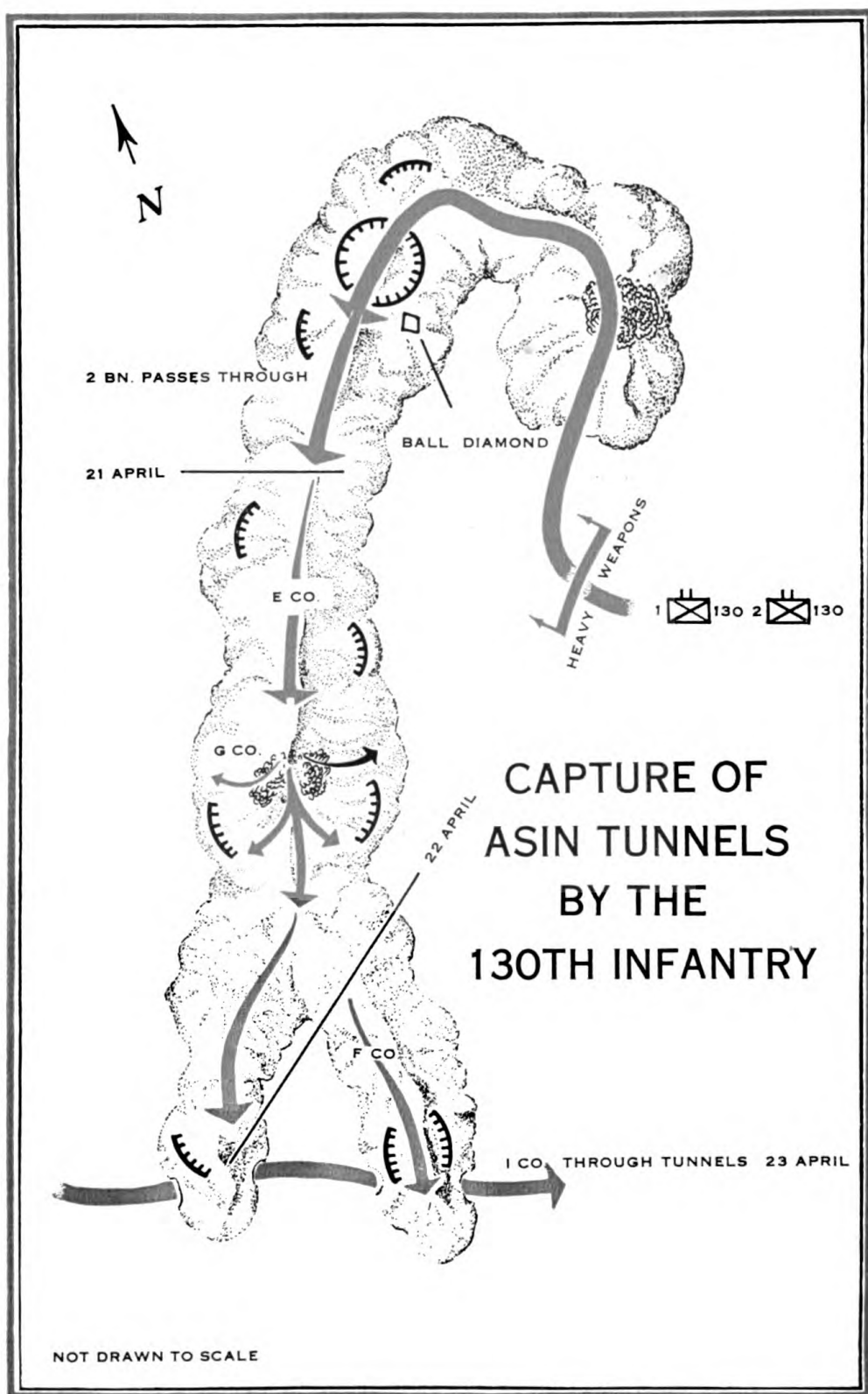
would prove impossible. Gambling on this possibility the Japanese commander detailed a considerable force to carry out this night counter-attack.

Making plans is one thing; executing them another. The Japs smashed against the Easy and Fox perimeters all night. Tired dough-boys, realizing that if they were pushed off now that they'd only have to return and do the job again, retaliated with crushing fires. They refused to yield so much as an inch. The Japs suffered considerably from their ill-advised move. Troops of the 2d Battalion cut them down in wholesale lots. By morning the last of the attackers had been dispersed.

Shortly after dawn, Division artillery units prefaced the continuation of the attack with a fifteen-minute barrage of high explosives. When men of the 2d Battalion finally moved out aligned in a column of companies, it was against an enemy who had foolishly stripped himself of much manpower during the night.

Judging from the character of enemy resistance, however, the Jap seemed to have suffered little by his loss of men and weapons. Every yard was as tenaciously defended as it had been the previous day. The Jap was slowly being overrun, but in every instance he defended to the death. By 1100 hard-hitting Easy Company, under Capt. Gerard Unrein, had secured the second intermediate objective, another small knoll





Map 18

some nine hundred yards from the southern tip of the ridge. The Japs confronting Easy Company in its advance to this point gave way before the impetus of the drive and melted into small pockets on each side of the axis of advance.

Captain Maniatty's George Company, on the heels of Easy, methodically annihilated these small groups of Japanese. Frequently, in order to heave grenades into the many caves honeycombing the steep slopes of the ridge, George Company riflemen were forced to use small saplings to lean over the side of the ridge and parcel out their lethal greetings.

Major Faulconer handled his troops masterfully. Just when it appeared as if one company would be stopped, the lanky Kentuckian spelled it with another and thus managed to sustain his battalion's momentum. Easy Company rolled on another four hundred yards to the edge of the third intermediate objective, a large banana grove five hundred yards from the end of the ridge and first tunnel. The company seemed to have shot its wad after more than four hours of spearhead duty and continuous hand-to-hand combat. Major Faulconer quickly assigned the seizure of the grove to Captain Maniatty.

Before pushing on, the George Company leader asked for preparatory mortar and machine-gun fires. As soon as the last round left the tube riflemen raced across the grove, covering the entire objective area without suffering a single casualty. This time when the Nips poured out of their holes to reoccupy their gun positions they ran directly into accurate fire of George Company riflemen determined to prevent just such a move. With the banana grove in 2d Battalion hands the seizure of the rest of the ridge turned out to be a complete rout. By dusk George Company had secured the regimental objective; the high ground on top of the westernmost tunnel.

The southern tip of the Asin Tunnel ridge was shaped like an inverted U, the curve of the U representing a deep, wooded gorge referred to on the map as Windy Gulch Creek. The arms of the U were eight hundred yards apart and each housed one of the tunnels. Realizing that the enemy was beaten in the Asin sector, Colonel Collins, anxious to administer the *coup de grâce*, ordered Major Faulconer to seize the remaining hill and tunnel the following morning. The 2d Battalion was given a secondary mission of combing the southern portion of the ridge in a mop-up designed to catch any survivors of the previous day's action.

Scheme of maneuver for this final move called for a double envelopment with Company F attacking from the north and Item Company,

attached to the battalion for this action, moving from the south. Early on 23 April the attack was resumed with the aggressiveness characteristic of all Blackhawk activity along the ridge. Although the Jap resisted fiercely, these two companies gradually threw a ring of steel around his strongpoints and within a few hours the handful of Nips guarding the second tunnel and the hill above had been killed or driven off.

"The Ripper's" Blackhawks were over the hump. Baguio was a hop and a skip away.

In eleven days of action since they came up the Asin Valley through Galiano and past Bilbil and Lomboy, troops of the 130th Infantry accounted for more than 350 enemy killed in action. Blackhawk casualties totalled 72, with 13 dead.

## *Chapter 12: Pugo to Tuba: The High Road*

**D**IVISION recognized the 123d's facile envelopment of Hills X and Y and its subsequent seizure of Pugo as a stroke of rare good fortune. Now the Golden Cross was in possession of its first launching point, a base of operations capable of supporting an overland strike toward Baguio. The other infantry regiments were currently engaged in developing similar approaches but thus far their efforts had not yet crystallized. Of course sustained advance for the 136th Infantry was out of the question. Kennon Road was Northern Luzon's prime blind alley. Off to the west the 130th Infantry had just moved out on its sweeping end run. Forward companies were now at Aringay, girding for a move on Bauang.

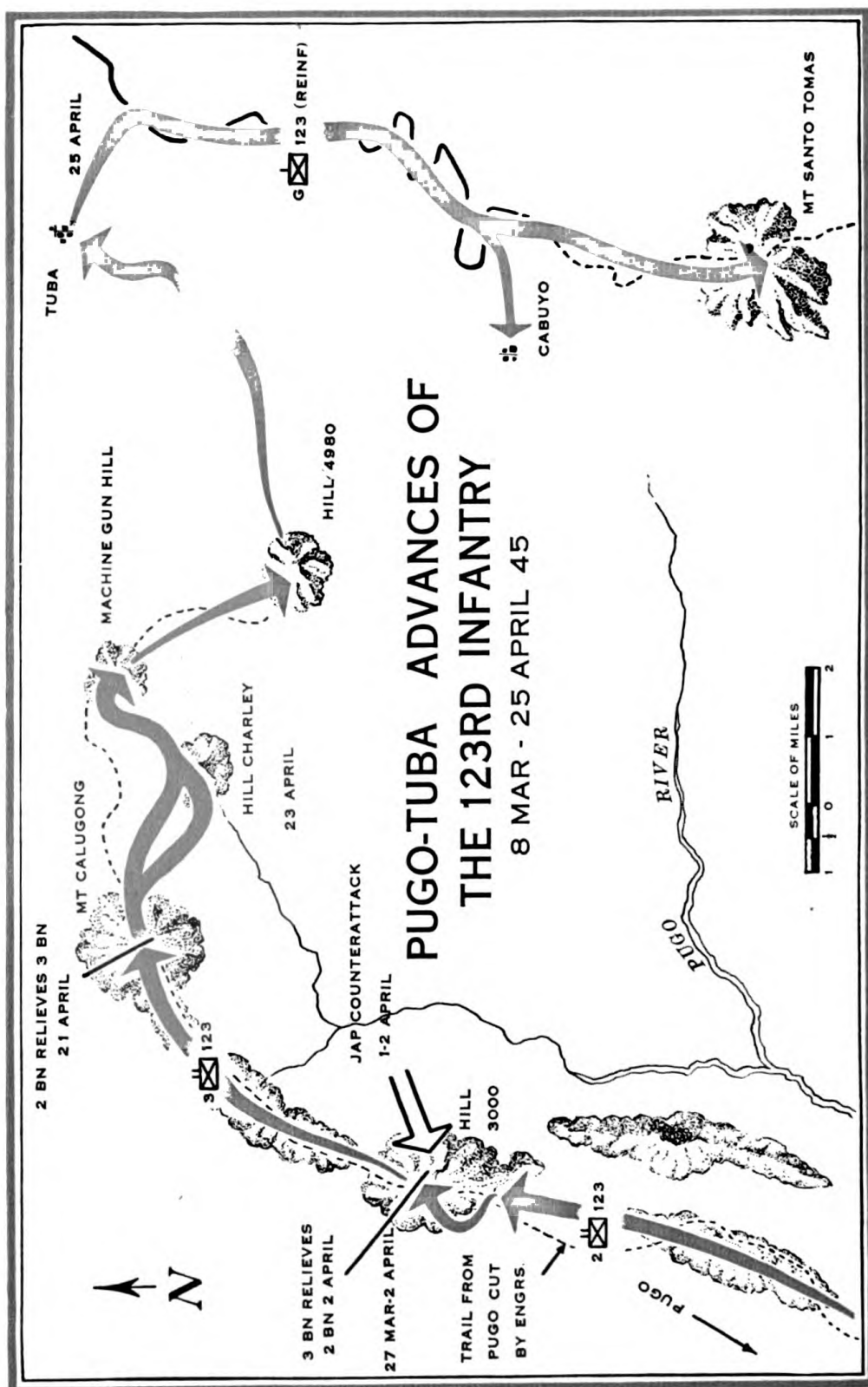
Tiny Pugo abounded with strategic significance. If an infantry salient could be pushed three thousand yards northeast, medium artillery would be able to close in and bring 155mm howitzer fire upon enemy installations in Baguio. Light artillery could share in the mission if and when the wedge progressed an additional three thousand yards. General Clarkson notified I Corps of his desire to fully exploit this opening. He meant to advance across country from Pugo to Tuba and thence to Baguio in a major effort.

Corps issued its approval. At the same time General Swift expressed grave doubt that a 33d Division drive along the Pugo-Tuba route could bear fruit. He cited such factors as the tangled masses of mountains confronting the 123d Infantry, the failure to locate the mythical Old Spanish Trail and the extreme difficulty incident to supporting and supplying a column committed over this section of the Caraballos.

Nevertheless, General Clarkson took immediate steps to implement his decision. Orders came down to the 123d instructing it to quit Pugo and head for Tuba without delay. If a supply route to spearhead elements could not be found, the Division would build one of its own.

Preliminary reconnaissance definitely scotched the legend of the Old Spanish Trail. Lieutenant Garrity's I & R Platoon, patrolling deep into enemy territory, reported only a narrow footpath running from Pugo to the edge of the mountain range. Once it entered the hills, the trail gradually grew less distinct and finally petered out completely. Division welcomed this information. It meant that nothing would be left to chance; combat units would be spared a wild goose chase. As a result, the 108th Engineer Combat Battalion was alerted to leave Pugo in support of the 123d Infantry. Its mission: to construct a road from Pugo supply distributing points to the forward companies. Extension of the road was to keep pace with advances of the column.

Lieutenant Colonel Hilton's 2d Battalion touched off the drive on



Map 19

9 March. Shortly after dawn his force left Pugo in a column of companies, with Fox, Easy and George moving in that order. Company B of the Engineers was scheduled to pull out on its road-building job the next morning. Colonel Serff kept his 1st Battalion at Pugo in regimental reserve and employed the 3d Battalion in a mop-up of the low foothills surrounding Pugo. Little opposition was met during the first day's march through the sweltering Caraballos. A few snipers potshot at the long column but caused no casualties. Counterfire from Capt. James F. Gilreath's F Company accounted for ten Nips. At dusk, as the battalion dug in for the night, it was more than two miles past Pugo.

George Company, commanded by Capt. Otis B. Rowland, Jr., assumed point duties on 10 March when the battalion resumed its advance. Enemy action was again confined to occasional trailblocks and raiding parties. But as the battalion pushed its way deeper into the mountains the terrain grew progressively more rugged, causing a general slow-down of movement. Contact between units became a difficult proposition. Heat and hills combined to inflict several march casualties. That evening as the battalion went into perimeter, infantrymen could see engineer bulldozers hacking their way across the tree-covered slopes behind them.

On 11 March the tactical situation developed with startling clarity. Disorganized snipers and small raiding parties became a thing of the past. In mid-morning the battalion hit a well organized outpost line emplaced along the ridges facing it. In order to break through, Lieutenant Colonel Hilton was forced to go into the attack with heavy mortars and artillery furnishing fire support. Even after several key points in this enemy line were neutralized the battalion could not work up to its former rate of advance. Companies had to move over a series of exposed razorback ridges in preference to the heavily wooded gullies fifteen hundred feet below. Japanese were holed up on each razorback, making the 2d Battalion fight hard for every inch of ground. Pugo was now almost three miles to the southwest.

Infantrymen did not have to be particularly astute to sense that each succeeding day would bring tougher campaigning and steeper mountains. When the battalion halted in late afternoon for a reorganization rifle companies got their first unimpeded view of objective No. 1.

Looming two miles to the battalion's front was a 3,000-foot-high mountain, so steep and bulky that it made surrounding terrain appear puny by comparison. Unlike others in the range, Hill 3000—so labelled because of its height—did not taper to a semipointed crest. Rather it





*Once past Pugo, infantry units encountered steep, heavily vegetated terrain*

was wide and gently sloping, giving the hill the look of a gigantic wart. Several long, tree-covered spurs rolled sharply down its sides. One, considerably longer than the others, lay directly in the battalion's path. It was admirably sited for defensive purposes, being able to serve as a buffer for the heart of the Japanese strongpoint atop the mountain. Terrain to east and west held no promise whatever.

To the right, or east, was a forbidding skein of mountains so sheer and festooned with tropical growth that they defied passage. Patrols operating on the flank of the column could not work through them. Looking past these approximately five miles, infantrymen sighted Mt. Santo Tomás, the highest peak in Northern Luzon. Standing more than 8,000 feet in height, Santo Tomás afforded the Japs excellent observation of both Pugo-Tuba and Kennon Road activities. On the opposite side the ground was equally impassable. Temporarily at least, maneuver became a meaningless word. There was only one way to Tuba. It led across Hill 3000.

At a conference of battalion staff members and company commanders held that evening Lieutenant Colonel Hilton outlined a plan of extensive combat patrolling, to remain in effect until the force had uncovered a weak spot on Hill 3000 or fought up to a foothold. Whenever possible the enemy was to be kept off balance through constant

jabbing and probing of patrols. Operations were to commence the next morning, 12 March.

Unfortunately, these plans were never given an opportunity to jell. Word arrived at the battalion CP at dawn ordering Lieutenant Colonel Hilton to forego offensive activity until further instructions were issued. In a sudden move, Sixth Army Headquarters had halted advances of the entire I Corps. Enemy resistance in the mountainous areas around Manila had remained stout in the face of heavy Army pressure. General Krueger desired to crush this opposition before committing his forces too deeply in Northern Luzon. A secure Manila was vital to high-level planners. It was desperately needed as a supply base for future operations against the Japanese homeland. For this reason—and his inability to reinforce the 33d if it became engaged in a major battle—General Krueger turned on the red light.

Sixth Army held the battalion in check until 26 March. However, Lieutenant Colonel Hilton did not waste a moment of this period. Small, fast reconnaissance patrols made entry into enemy positions and compiled data which later proved invaluable to the 123d's drive. Engineer road-builders caught up to the 2d Battalion. Howitzers of the 122d Field Artillery displaced to positions directly in rear of the infantry, prepared to bring fires on Hill 3000. Aerial reconnaissances by commanders became a daily occurrence, enabling them to look beyond their immediate objective.

Due to local circumstances, Division did not abide completely by Army's edict, for which General Clarkson assumed full responsibility. Toward the latter part of the idle period he permitted regimental commanders to exercise their own discretion in the matter of forward movement. Hilton's battalion was able to inch forward to more favorable terrain in the Hill 3000 area. The General's decision permitted Golden Cross troops in all sectors to keep up some offensive activity. As a consequence the enemy was unable to mass strength in front of the 33d's near-blunted spearheads, thereby saving American lives in future operation.

Front-line companies saw steady action now that the battalion was nearing Hill 3000. Night raids became a steady diet for Hilton's men. Reconnaissance patrols going out during daylight hours found increased interference. These evident preparations for a 2d Battalion attack annoyed the Japanese. Enemy outposts were greatly strengthened, ambushes became more commonplace.

This counteractivity was cunningly executed. On one occasion, while the battalion was engaged in consolidating its positions, the Nips almost

snared a George Company platoon. Only extraordinary heroism on the part of the platoon's lead scout, Pfc. John P. Hegarty, prevented serious damage. Hegarty's citation for the Distinguished Service Cross, awarded posthumously, tells the story:

Private Hegarty, a first scout, Company G, 123d Infantry, was moving with his platoon through enemy territory to reinforce another unit when he alertly discovered two enemy riflemen in a foxhole just off the trail. He killed them both. Although the presence of these two men indicated that a larger force was probably near, he fearlessly moved forward and soon drew heavy fire from enemy riflemen and machine gunners. However, he charged toward one of the machine guns in a gallant effort to knock it out. Firing as he advanced, Private Hegarty continued on in face of the heavy hostile concentration until another machine gun suddenly opened up, wounding him in the chest and stomach. Mortally hit and gasping for breath, he continued to fire, killing two more of the enemy and neutralizing their position. Private Hegarty's initiative and determination in the face of great odds aided materially in the successful completion of the platoon's mission. His dauntless fighting spirit was an inspiration to all those with whom he served.

## II

Army gave the Division its head on 26 March. Orders to advance along all fronts immediately went down to the infantry regiments. In anticipation of the Army directive, Colonel Serff had been gradually increasing air strikes and artillery preparations on objectives confronting his 2d Battalion. Since 22 March Hill 3000 had taken a daily saturation of Napalm and high explosives. The mountain was somewhat weird in appearance now; flaming gasoline had burned long dark patches along its crest and 122d Field Artillery fire had obliterated numerous trees. However, patrols returning to the CP on the night of the 26th had little encouraging information. Enemy defenses were as powerful as before. Estimates of Japanese strength on the hill ran between one and two reinforced battalions.

Relatively rested, George Company was instructed to go into the attack on 27 March. Captain Rowland's troops had as their objective a small peak approximately eight hundred yards to their front. Lying in a wide horseshoe formed by 3000's longest spur and a shorter one to the west, this hill was of strategic import. Possession of it by his battalion meant that Hilton could bypass the Jap buffer position on the long spur and follow up with direct assault on the mountain. Surprisingly, Company G found little opposition throughout its approach march and subsequent assault. Captain Rowland had two men wounded in seizing his objective while five Nips were killed.



*105s near Pugo blast the approaches to Hill 3000*

Once positions on top of this hill were established, artillery forward observers called for heavy defensive fires to forestall counterattack. In addition to perimeter fires, artillery and heavy mortars pounded known strongpoints on the two flanking spurs. Lieutenant Colonel Hilton refused to wait another day before reinforcing his gauze-thin salient. Anxious to maintain the initiative, the 44-year-old Chicagoan sent Company E forward to drive the wedge deeper into the enemy line. Ellingsworth's unit passed through G Company at midnight and, advancing without preparatory fires, pushed on two thousand yards to secure a low ridge at the base of 3000.

Easy Company walked on to its objective without firing a shot. Between 0400 and dawn the company feverishly labored to dig in, emplace its crew-served weapons and prepare to repel counterattacking Japanese. With the arrival of daylight, the enemy reacted violently. For the greater part of the day they directed heavy machine-gun and mortar fires at the company, punctuating this activity with frequent attacks. Only the accuracy of friendly artillery and mortars permitted Ellingsworth to retain his grip on the ridge.

No advances were registered on 29 March. Artillery fires and a morning-long air strike continued the pounding of key installations on the crest and slopes of Hill 3000.

On the 30th the 2d Battalion undertook a rapid extension of its holdings. Fox Company assumed the lead, driving from the battalion CP to a position more than halfway up the western spur. Combat patrols launched from this area managed to close in on Hill 3000 until they were scarcely a thousand feet below the crest and less than a half-

mile from the mountain itself. Again the enemy refused to commit themselves in strength, choosing to counter Fox's infiltration with the same suicide raids conducted against Easy on the 28th. Artillery rendered these efforts no more successful.

This succession of swift thrusts, made at times and places where the Japanese least expected them, placed the 2d Battalion in excellent position for the climax attack. However, as was expected, the Japanese snapped out of their lethargy at this juncture. All-out attacks by Fox and George Companies were repulsed on the morning of 31 March with moderate casualties. Now, if enemy tactics forced Lieutenant Colonel Hilton to adopt a frontal slugging technique, the fight was liable to settle down into a long and costly one. A daring, radical solution was in critical demand.

Colonel Serff, a constant front-line habitué since Sixth Army freed the 123d Infantry, supplied a decisive answer. Always an advocate of aggressiveness, the affable West Pointer ordered the 2d Battalion to make a night attack on Hill 3000. The regimental commander counted wholly on the element of surprise to reduce the strongly defended bastion. If the attack attained success, elements of the 123d would experience little difficulty in mopping up the draws, spurs and assorted strongpoints below the crest. Major Wolff's 3d Battalion was alerted to support Hilton's move. In regimental reserve, his force was currently advancing behind the 2d, nailing down the 123d's flanks.

Artillery redoubled its harassing fires on the afternoon of 31 March. Cannon Company M-7s, able to move along the engineer-built road, augmented the fires of Lieutenant Colonel Carlson's 122d Field Artillery. Several machine guns emplaced in caves on top of 3000 were taken under direct fire by the self-propelled guns. Liaison pilots reported that Capt. Stanley J. Patterson's cannoneers had destroyed seven of them.

Fires slackened with the arrival of darkness but flared up again at 2400 when Companies F and G—the attacking force—went into their approach marches. Advancing behind a rolling barrage, Fox drove northward toward the crest from its position near the left spur. Company G, assembled in the center of the horseshoe, branched off to the northeast, mounting the right spur a few yards below the point where it became welded to the mountain. Moving by stealth, the two companies were severely buffeted by the thick vegetation and precipitous terrain, but succeeded in escaping enemy detection. A few minutes prior to dawn both Gilreath and Rowland were on top of Hill 3000. Scarcely two hundred yards separated their forces.

Quickly they deployed into skirmish lines and poured into the Japanese stronghold. Thoroughly aroused at this point, the enemy waged a fierce fight, engaging F and G with all the fire power at their command. However, this was not enough to compensate for the advantage gained by the 2d Battalion's bold maneuver. Slowly but relentlessly, 123d infantrymen collapsed the enemy defense. Close combat continued without abatement until late afternoon when the heart of the Nip line was pierced. Unable to fend off F and G's final assault, the Japs gathered what casualties they could and retreated to the north.

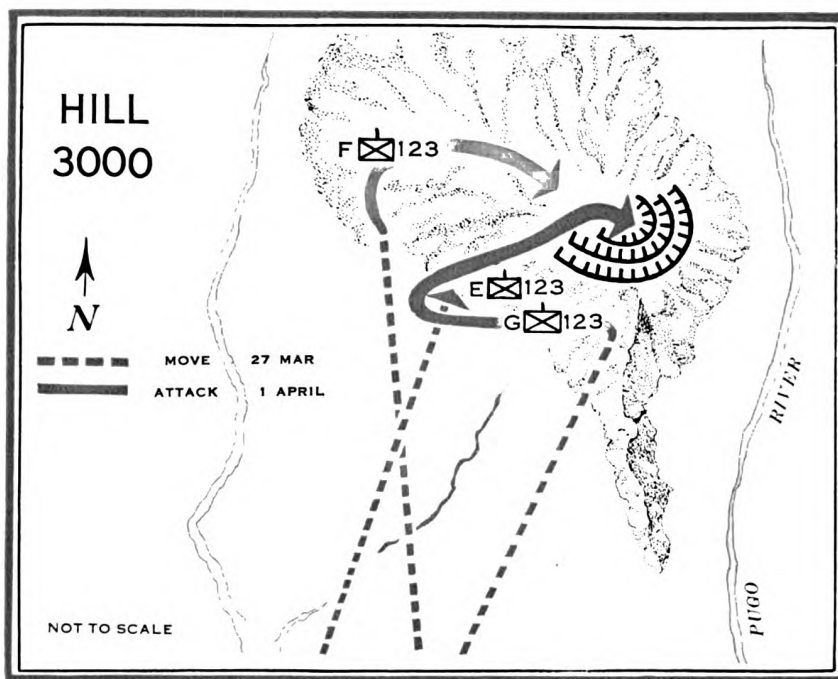
Impending darkness prevented anything more than a cursory mop-up. The 2d Battalion, now reinforced by its support company, consolidated its position on Hill 3000. At dusk, Japanese mortars on the reverse slope of the mountain opened up on the unit. Catching some men in the act of digging in, this shelling accounted for a few casualties. Lt. Lorne R. Stanley, artillery forward observer with Company G, immediately sought to silence this damaging fire. With a wireman he moved two hundred yards in front of the perimeter in search of a point from which he could make fire adjustments. As Lieutenant Stanley was connecting his telephone, a Nambu machine gun cut loose, tearing the set from his hand and forcing him to withdraw.

Japanese activity was accelerated on 2 April after the usual night of harassing attacks. With daylight, the enemy began an unceasing barrage of heavy mortar and machine-gun fire. Stanley again voluntarily left the perimeter to locate the source. This time he managed to gain communication with the 122d's fire direction center. In the midst of an adjustment, two snipers working in from his flanks began to shoot at him. Hit by the first bullet, Stanley responded with his carbine, killing one Jap and chasing his comrade. While George Company, behind him, prepared to move out in the attack, Stanley brought his entire battalion on the Nip strongpoint containing the machine guns and mortars.

Now Rowland's men took over. Storming the knob, George Company quickly disposed of twenty-seven Japs. On the ground they found thirty-one more killed by artillery fragments. Three knee mortars and four light machine guns likewise had felt the impact of the howitzers. Lieutenant Stanley was awarded the Distinguished Service Cross for his heroism and determination.

Hill 3000 was completely mopped up by 1600 of 2 April. Enemy dug in on the spurs put up bitter resistance but could not stop 2d Battalion riflemen who swarmed down upon them. In the final analysis more than two hundred enemy died defending the mountain at a cost





Map 20

of seven killed and fifteen wounded to the 2d Battalion. A prisoner taken a few days later stated that of two rifle companies and one machine-gun company holding Hill 3000 less than ten men survived.

Among the documents removed from the bodies of dead Nips was one written on 1 April by an irate company commander. Reflecting his complete disgust at being outmaneuvered, it read:

It is determined that the enemy infiltrated into our positions with a lightning attack. Tell me, what made it possible for this enemy to thrust a dagger into us? No, you need not explain. You and other platoon leaders and men are a bunch of cowards—shuddering at the sound of enemy artillery fire and aerial bombardment. Furthermore, you men are sleeping. Be alert! However, if you men counterattack the enemy with lightning ferocity, the enemy will be completely wiped out. Remember your responsibilities! The regimental and battalion commanders are much concerned about this present situation. Do not rely on the other companies to do your part. You damned fools!

Combat success on Hill 3000 resulted from the close coordination of infantry, field artillery and engineers. The low doughboy casualty rate attests to the effectiveness of Lieutenant Colonel Carlson's redlegs. Luckily, the Japanese did not employ their own mountain pieces against the 2d Battalion, using them instead on the hapless 1st Battalion which



*Igorot women, acting as carriers, contributed much to the outcome of the Pugo-Tuba drive* was engaged in a bloody fight to break through Galiano. Members of this unit were receiving an average of almost a hundred rounds daily. Due to engineer perseverance, the supply tie-up anticipated by Corps never materialized. Sweating and battling their way forward in the infantry's wake, Lieutenant Colonel Kane's road-builders kept a steady flow of matériel streaming to the front line.

### III

Hilton's unit was withdrawn for a rest on the afternoon of 2 April, the 3d Battalion assuming its position on Hill 3000. At the same time, Company B, 108th Engineer Combat Battalion—which had constructed the road out of Pugo—reverted to 130th Infantry control. Able Company, normally attached to the 123d, relieved it at the foot of Hill 3000. Major Wolff, commanding the 3d Battalion, dispatched combat and reconnaissance patrols toward the regiment's next objective, Mt. Calugong. Located two miles north of 3000, Calugong differed only in the respect that it was a thousand feet higher. It had the steep slopes, broad crest and heavily indented defiles characteristic of Hill 3000. From documents captured on 1 April, Wolff knew that the mountain was manned by elements of the Japanese 64th Infantry Regiment reinforced with several artillery batteries.

While patrols searched the approaches to Calugong, the engineers pushed their road directly up the sheer southern slope of Hill 3000. With a route in, two batteries of the 122d were able to displace forward to positions on the mountain top. M-7s also rumbled into place

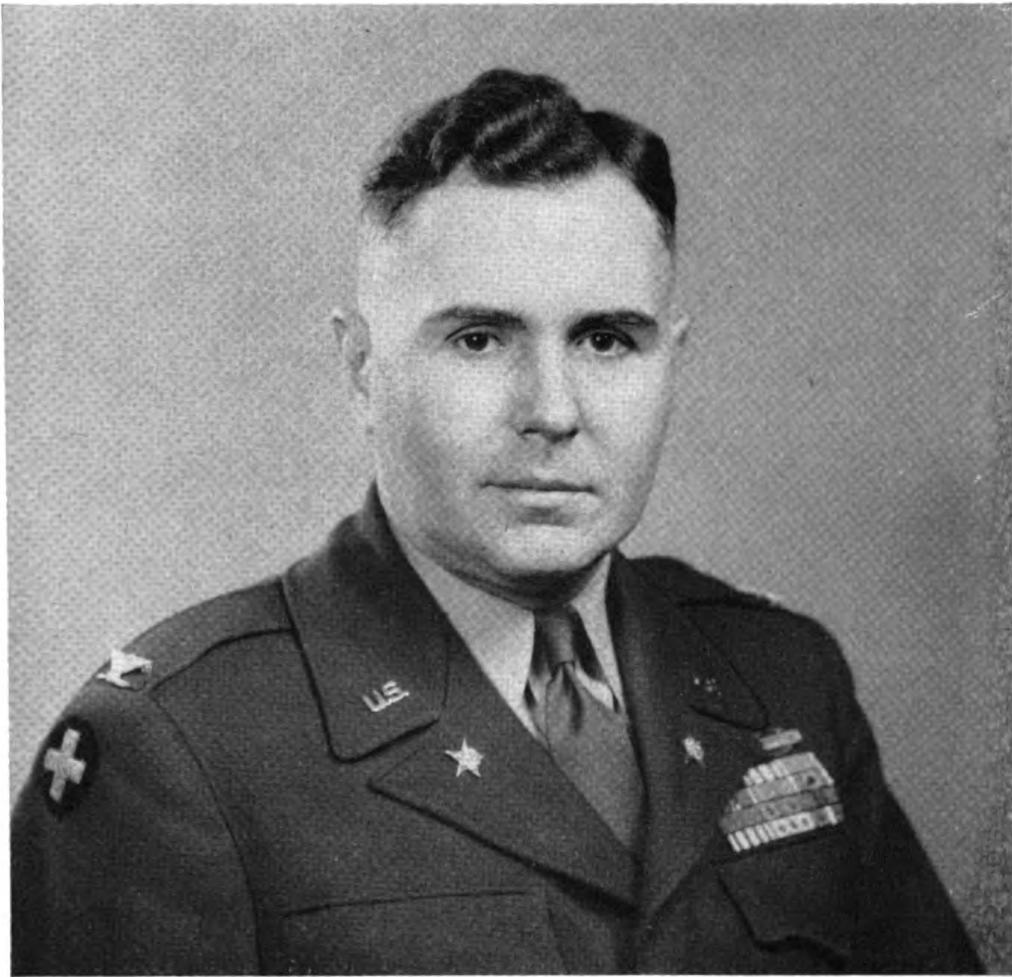
on the crest, prepared to bring direct howitzer fire against Mt. Calugong.

Company K, commanded by Capt. Raymond J. Rush, led the 3d Battalion column as it struck northward toward Calugong on 10 April. Little activity transpired during the first day of march; the hills were crowded with snipers but the company was able to make good time. By sunset King was at the base of a series of twisting razorback ridges leading to Calugong. To supply this company it became necessary to employ Igorot women as rations and ammunition carriers. Matériel could advance by vehicle only as far as Hill 3000 where the engineer road had its temporary terminus. Once delivered at the truckhead, supplies had to be hand-carried to rifle companies. Throughout the Calugong operation, these women performed valiant service. Ambushes, snipers and trailblocks failed to stop them. At the first sign of enemy activity, Igorot men, moving with lighter loads, dropped their burdens and headed for cover. The women serenely advanced, confident that their armed guards would see them through safely.

After an uneventful night, Captain Rush led K Company forward in an attack along the ridgeline. When halfway up, he ran into a carefully organized enemy strongpoint emplaced across the ridge. Patrols advancing ahead of the column were stopped cold. As the company followed in an assault formation it too was halted by this literal wall of steel. Two machine guns on the right side of the ridge formed the nucleus of the Japanese installation. Concealed in high grass, these Nambus had clear, enfilading fire lanes. Artillery and heavy mortars supported the Nip defenses.

Rather than withdraw, Rush elected to dig in under this heavy fire. Friendly artillery tried to reach the two key machine guns but failed due to the close proximity of the weapons to King troops. Again on 12 April the company attacked and again overwhelming fire superiority forced it back. Company K went into its old perimeter for the night and prepared to assault for the third time at dawn.

As the force prepared to move out on the 13th, the first scout of the lead platoon, Pfc. Vernon H. Fairchild, volunteered to advance alone and determine the precise location of the two key machine guns. Purposely exposing himself to draw fire, Fairchild evaded the opening bursts and circled along the ridgeside toward the right gun. When five yards from it he cut loose with point-blank submachine-gun fire, disposing of three Japs operating the piece. He then rushed the second gun fifteen yards away and killed its two gunners and a rifleman in an adjacent foxhole. Calling to his platoon to follow, Fairchild re-



*Colonel Andrew T. McAnsh, Division Chief of Staff*

sumed his spectacular assault. During the close combat that followed he was shot through the head by an enemy rifleman. Although he lost an eye, Fairchild recovered from his wound. He received the DSC for his courageous assault. King Company secured the position.

Action in other parts of the battalion sector closely paralleled Company K's. Item, under Capt. Courtney R. Shirley, and Love fought their way over similar terrain against the same fanatical opposition. Calugong developed into a far bloodier battle than the one for Hill 3000. Jap artillery, mercilessly hammering the companies as they hacked their way over the gnarled razorbacks, caused numerous casualties. Counterbattery fire was placed against all suspected gun locations but to no avail. This fight was a complete battalion effort. Every unit was in the line, wholly involved in its own miniature war. On 17 April Companies K and L collaborated in a battalion attack which gained a grip on Calugong for the 123d Infantry. This engagement

was described in the following article published in the *Infantry Journal*. It was written by Colonel McAnsh, Division Chief of Staff, who witnessed the action:

### INCIDENT ON THE ROAD TO BAGUIO<sup>1</sup>

LOCALE: *Northern Luzon, Philippine Islands*

TIME: *0900 17 April 1945*

CHARACTERS: *Major Sanford I. Wolff, CO, 3d Battalion, 123d Infantry; Lt. Col. Roland P. (Bud) Carlson, CO, 122d Field Artillery Battalion; Capt. Raymond J. Rush, Company K, 123d Infantry; Capt. William P. Crenshaw, Company L, 123d Infantry; Lt. Dolman W. Vineyard, Liaison Pilot, 122d Field Artillery Battalion; Major William A. Hadfield, S-3, 122d Field Artillery Battalion.*

In April 1945 the 33d Division was busily engaged in pushing several columns through the mountains of Northern Luzon toward Baguio. To the 123d Infantry, supported by the 122d Field Artillery Battalion, fell the task of pushing uphill from Pugo along a faint Igorot trail through mountains 3,500 feet high. The nature of the terrain dictated the use of only one battalion at a time, so battalions were rotated. The 108th Engineers were engaged in pushing a bulldozer road along this trail, following knife-edge ridges, while scores of Igorot women carried immense loads of supplies on their backs between the end of the road (truckhead) and the troops. The entire operation was a race with the elements, as the rainy season was due and would immobilize all traffic on the slippery roads.

April 17 found the 3d Battalion acting as the spearhead for the regiment. At 0730 the battalion moved out in column of companies with King Company leading and Love Company just behind King. Just behind the leading company, Wolff and Carlson moved along the trail. Rush was forward with his leading platoon. The trail was winding and narrow, on the left a precipitous though heavily thicketed gorge; on the right of the trail the ground rose in a gentle slope with

<sup>1</sup>Not included in Colonel McAnsh's account is the reaction of the lead platoon when it was fired upon by the Japanese machine guns. Leader of the first squad, S/Sgt. William E. Warren, singlehandedly attacked the enemy position as soon as his scouts were hit. Though wounded by sniper fire, Warren charged one "Woodpecker," killing the crew. He then seized the piece and brought fire to bear on Jap riflemen surrounding the emplacement. Decorated with the DSC for this action, Sergeant Warren was credited with the destruction of five Nips.

dense undergrowth and thick foliage. At an elevation of 3,500 feet, rain was falling and visibility was difficult.

At approximately 0830, as the column was lengthening out, the sharp crack of Jap machine guns was heard toward the head of the column. Immediately following was heard the answering fire of a BAR. Soon rifles, Jap and American, cracked intermittently. The column stopped. The battlewise men at the rear of the column immediately started eating their K rations.

The following in dialogue form is the actual conversation and action taken by the infantry and artillery commanders from the opening of the fight until the column resumed its march.

O.P. (*SCR-300 radio*): Wolff, Rush calling.

WOLFF: This is Wolff. Can you tell what's up there, Rush?

RUSH: Head of column is at sharp right turn in the trail. Trail is cut through the roads at that point and two "woodpeckers" opened up as we made the turn. Only one of the guides was hit. Think I've got both guns pretty well spotted.

WOLFF: I'm with your 2d Platoon moving toward you. Come and meet me.

*(Rush and Wolff meet and make their way up to where the point is pinned down. Ground is as Rush said. They crawl back while men of leading elements are exchanging rifle shots with enemy riflemen dug into the hill on the right side of the trail. Carlson meets them.)*

CARLSON: Can I help?

WOLFF: Guess you could, Bud, but I'm afraid it will mean that I'll have to waste time backing up. Rush, I can't see how your mortars can do any good either. Have your 2d Platoon start by-passing around the left of the trail up and down the slope and as soon as they are as far forward as the first, push the first around the turn, if they can get up. That's obviously a dug-in strongpoint but an envelopment that way may work. If it does, have the 2d come back and join on the trail, don't rush it. Wait now until Carlson is through.

CARLSON: I'm just going to call the FDC and send a plane up here. It takes the pilot about twenty minutes to climb up this high. He may be able to help when he gets here, you might decide you need some fire later.

WOLFF: Yes, we might. OK, Rush, go ahead. Bud and I will follow you.

CARLSON: (*SCR-609 radio to Major Hadfield at Artillery FDC*): Bill, this is Bud. We are pinned down—will try maneuver—leading ele-



ments too close for artillery fire. Send Vineyard (*liaison pilot*) up here right away. Have Charlie Battery stand by to lay on Concentration 264 just in case.

HADFIELD: Roger. Vin will be over you in about twenty minutes.

(*Leading squads of K Company move up again to attempt envelopment. Carlson and Wolff follow. About ten to fifteen minutes elapse—suddenly machine guns open up again.*)

RUSH: (*radio*) Can't make it this way without getting badly cut up. There's a whole strongpoint, at least two more machine guns, one of them a heavy. Can Bud help us out any?

WOLFF: (*radio*) Yes, we heard the heavy. Bud, can you help?

CARLSON: Yes, if you pull back about 200 yards. We're going to get tree bursts and somebody may get hurt. Start moving back. (*Rush meets them*) Rush, we've got to mark that target for the pilot; he won't be able to find it in this jungle. Have you any smoke grenades?

RUSH: Orange and white.

CARLSON: OK, let's get 'em. We'll pitch one as close to that machine-gun nest as we can.

(*There is still intermittent rifle and machine-gun fire.*)

WOLFF: I'll pull back. Meet you back there and tell you when we are ready. Rush, tell your point to keep up the fire if possible but start moving back. Have the whole company move back as soon as I get the other companies started.

(*Wolff goes to radio, gives brief résumé of situation to COs and necessary orders. Tells Crenshaw to be ready to come up fast when Rush moves forward again, after the artillery fire, and be ready to take his company off the trail and over the slope to the right [east].*)

CARLSON: (*by radio to liaison pilot*): Vin, are you up yet?

VINEYARD: (*radio*) Just approaching top of Calugong, where are you?

CARLSON: (*radio*) Due north along the trail—circle and look for an orange grenade. (*Scout throws grenade*) There's the grenade; can you see it?

VINEYARD: (*radio*) Wait— (*flies low along the trail*) OK, OK, I see it.

CARLSON: (*radio*) Strongpoint: two to four machine guns, one of them is just fifteen yards north of that grenade—lots of riflemen—we're pulling out of here now and will set up radio again back down the trail. Find that target and study it—contact FDC. Charlie Battery is already laid on Concentration 264. Don't open fire until I call you back.

VINEYARD: (*radio*) Wilco, out.

CARLSON: All right Rush, let's get back.

*(King Company moves back, about 150 yards, disperses along side of trail. Carlson, Wolff and Rush, with a -609 radio, find a place just in front of the leading squad, where foliage on trees does not cover trail, so pilot can see them. Radio is set up, Rush calls two men up on flanks of radio. Wolff, Rush and two men watch for Jap scouts.)*

CARLSON: *(radio)* Vin, we're all set. Swing over the trail back here. I'll wave my map for you to spot us. *(Waves map in air as plane swings overhead.)*

VINEYARD: *(radio)* OK, Bud, I see you. Have spotted four machine-gun positions and many spider holes around them. The one where the smoke grenade fell is in the center—one other emplacement west of it and two east. *(Rush and leading scout, listening, nod heads.)* Where are our leading troops?

CARLSON: *(radio)* Foremost elements at this spot—start shooting—watch the tree bursts, we're mighty close.

VINEYARD: *(radio)* You're too close—can't shoot until you move back. You're actually only 100 to 125 yards from the machine-gun nest.

WOLFF: *(listening in)* Bud, we can't move back farther. Take too much time and we'll jam up the whole battalion.

CARLSON: *(radio)* OK, Vin, start shooting. I'll control safety from here. We are not moving any more—get going.

VINEYARD: *(radio)* Roger—Kadi 3 this is Kadi 7. Fire mission: Jap strongpoint machine guns emplaced, riflemen, concentration 264 is 200 left 400 short, request battalion, will adjust, Bud will designate volleys for effect.

HADFIELD: *(radio)* Concentration 271, Battalion, Charlie—wait.

CARLSON: *(To Wolff, Rush and Sergeant of leading platoon.)* Fire for effect will be five volleys, then a three-minute silence to let the Japs stick their heads up again, then six more volleys. After the last six, I'll sing out "round complete"—wait ten seconds for time of flight of the last round and then take off.

WOLFF: OK, Rush, when you get the word, move fast. I'll stay back here and catch Crenshaw and if there's anything in the woods around the turn, I'll bring them over the slope.

HADFIELD: *(radio)* On the way.

VINEYARD: *(radio)* Bud, salvo was bracketing for effect, but Number 4 was very close to you. Will a sensing of fifty short be safe?

CARLSON: *(radio)* We saw and felt Number 4. You'd better give it 100 short.

VINEYARD: *(radio)* Roger—100 short—

HADFIELD: On the way.

VINEYARD: (*radio*): Effect excellent, short rounds are getting the machine-gun positions, long rounds raking the spider holes behind. Are they safe, Bud?

CARLSON: (*radio*) Fire for effect, five volleys, then wait three minutes, then fire six volleys, let me know when last six are complete. Bill, we're getting some fragments here, tell the cannoneers to level the bubbles carefully, anything short will hurt us badly. (*To Wolff*): Everybody stay down—Wolff, we'll get a lot of fragments from the base spray.

WOLFF: OK, we'll have to risk it.

HADFIELD: (*radio*) Fire for effect on the way.

(*Concentration falls, pilot keeps close watch of the effect. Infantry remains prone. Fragments hit one infantryman and Carlson—luckily, just a scratch.*)

CARLSON: Rounds complete, Rush.

RUSH: (*After 10 seconds*) King Company, let's go.

(*King moves out on the double. Love Company follows in column.*)

VINEYARD: (*Watching advance from air*) Leading squad is in the position, has captured the center machine gun. No trouble yet! Some Japs moving around in woods to the rear of the position.

WOLFF: Swell, Bud, I'm going to move Love Company up and swing them to the right, up over that slope. If the Japs open up again, Love will nail them.

(*Love squeezes through King's rearmost platoon up to a point on the trail selected for them to ascend the slope. Just as Crenshaw himself comes up, Wolff stops him, tells him to drive through the wooded area and back to the trail and to be careful that they don't fire into King Company or come up on them by surprise. Just then automatic weapons and rifle fire breaks out and King Company's column stops. Wolff crawls to radio and Rush comes on.*)

RUSH: (*radio*) We got around the turn, right past two guns. There are about eleven dead Japs around the guns and one alive, but stunned, and a grenade killed him fast. Now there's another machine gun and at least thirty riflemen looking down our throats from the right side of the trail. This is worse than before.

WOLFF: (*radio*) I'll be right there. Hold your column where it is—be careful your fire doesn't hit Crenshaw. Tell your men to make a lot of noise and keep the Japs' attention from Love's movement. Love will hit them in a few minutes now, from what you say. Get the men to shout and yell. I'll tell Crenshaw what's going on.



A gun crew of the 122d Field Artillery Battalion prepares to fire the first round into Baguio. Left to right: Sergeant Edward T. Marx, Pfc. J. D. Dollar, Cpl. Pete Antonio, and Pfc. Jack H. Reed.

CRENSHAW: (*radio*) I heard the whole conversation—we're about forty yards from the Japs, we should see them soon. Rush, stop your firing but make a lot of noise.

(*King Company starts its noisemaking. In a few minutes a great deal of rifle firing breaks out, practically all M1s. Love Company has reached the spot and King's leading platoon scrambles up the slope to join them in annihilating some thirty dazed Japs, in and around their spider holes.*)

Reports later showed that when Love first hit the Japs, the enemy was just starting out of their holes toward King Company, apparently puzzled by the noise. It was an easy job for the two companies to mop up those who had moved from their holes.

At 0925 the battalion, with a new advance guard, moved out along the trail.

Calugong was merely a shell of its former self after this one crippling attack. Again on 19 April King and Love effected a joint assault. Launched behind an intense barrage provided by the 122d, this one carried the battalion to the crest of the mountain. In the ensuing

mop-up more than a full-strength enemy company was annihilated. Wolff immediately pivoted on Calugong and sent Company L driving eastward. Captain Crenshaw's troops were ordered to seize Hill Charley, a 3,500-foot-high escarpment roughly a mile away. Crenshaw was able to close on his objective rapidly as the enemy offered no resistance. Dusk found Love Company halfway up the side of Hill Charley. Here it paused for the night.

With dawn, Company L resumed its climb. Surprisingly, it was able to walk right to the crest of Hill Charley without interference. However, this lack of opposition was part of a clever Japanese trap. While the company was digging in, enemy artillery which had previously adjusted on the mountain, laid an accurate, murderous concentration on Crenshaw and his men. Nip howitzers raked every square foot of the barren crest, quickly killing four infantrymen and wounding another twenty-two. Withdrawal was Love's sole alternative. Counterbattery fire silenced Jap guns sufficiently to permit Crenshaw to back off Hill Charley and pull back to Calugong where he contacted the rest of the 3d Battalion.

The combat-weary 3d Battalion was withdrawn from Calugong on the morning of 21 April to rest up for the climax attack on Baguio. Lieutenant Colonel Hilton's 2d Battalion came forward from Pugo and relieved Major Wolff's unit on position. After a day of familiarization with the terrain, reinforced patrols from Easy and George Companies pushed for Hill Charley on a reconnaissance in force. Easy followed the same route taken by Crenshaw on the 19th and 20th, but the Company G unit, commanded by Lt. Sidney Werlin, beat its way across-country and prepared to ascend the southern slope of Charley in conjunction with the Easy effort. At the conclusion of the operation, Captain Rowland, Company G commander, submitted a narrative report. Part of it is quoted below:

Company G contacted an enemy outpost on the east slopes of Calugong and wiped it out. The march across the valley separating Calugong and Hill Charley was made without event. This time the crest of the objective was not unoccupied. Enemy riflemen, mortars and machine guns were deployed in strength along the top, giving the hill all-around protection. Easy, hitting the western side, neutralized opposition along that flank before Werlin's men reached the peak. Both then went into coordinated attack which smashed resistance on the crest. The enemy was forced to retreat to alternate positions on the northern slope. Although E and G were in complete control of the mountain top, they could not clear the northern side. Lieutenant Werlin had his men dig in to await crew-served weapons coming up with the remainder of Company G. I came up with other platoons an hour before dark.

Two-man prone holes were constructed and reinforced with six-inch logs cut from a nearby patch of woods. As daylight faded away, the Japs brought down their artillery. No casualties occurred but all company communications were completely knocked out. Once the moon set at 0400 the Nips tried their usual infiltration tactics. They were beaten off with artillery and 60mm mortar fire. Lt. Donald Regelman's 2d Platoon left the perimeter at dawn to overrun remaining enemy positions. Losses sustained during the night had weakened the enemy considerably and Regelman was able to mop-up without too much trouble.

Orders were sent from battalion headquarters directing E and G to move off Hill Charley toward Machine Gun Hill, a mountain of similar appearance about a half-mile north of us. Easy passed through George, promptly crossed the deep gully separating Machine Gun and Charley and went into the attack. They were beaten back and G went forward to lend assistance. After lengthy artillery and M-7 concentrations were thrown against the objective, the two-company force again assaulted but with no more success. Company G withdrew to Charley for the night while Company E went into perimeter between Hill Charley and Mt. Calugong.

The enemy installation was kept under intermittent harassing fire throughout the night, and shortly after daylight Company H heavy machine guns were brought up to cover another attack against Machine Gun Hill. George Company tried to cut around the objective and take it from the rear but precipitous slopes scotched the plan. Finally one platoon from Company E advanced frontally against the target and formed a base of fire while Werlin and Regelman knifed in from its flanks. Supporting fire paralyzed the Nips and we were able to make this one good. By 1200 Machine Gun Hill was ours. We dug in here for the night.

#### IV

Fox Company was not committed in the latest advance toward Tuba but experienced equally bloody action while the rest of the 2d Battalion fought over Charley and Machine Gun Hills. Gilreath was sent northwest from Calugong to Mt. Lomboy, a map distance of three miles. He had orders to eliminate a Japanese garrison dug in along a high ridge overlooking the Galiano Valley. From this position the enemy had been constantly harassing the 130th Infantry supply line running through the valley to Asin. General Clarkson had personally ordered this move, recognizing a Calugong-Lomboy drive as an excellent opportunity to assist the 130th's effort. The Division Commander had a clear view of the intervening terrain from his Calugong observation post. Company F left on this mission on the morning of 22 April.

Gilreath had little trouble locating a route which led to the eastern base of Mt. Lomboy. He reached the foot of the mountain a few minutes after 1200. However, the rapid advance across the wild country had reduced his command to a state of near-exhaustion. The day had been oppressively hot and the water supply had given out



during the tortuous trek. Re-supply was impossible since the merciless rays of the sun had dried up the creeks and streams flowing through the mountains. Enemy reserves, halfway up Lomboy, chose this time to open up on the company. Before Fox could neutralize this fire and disengage, it had taken several casualties. Colonel Serff radioed Gilreath advising him to switch his attack to a second tree-covered bastion 1,500 yards north of Lomboy.

Without pausing for rest the company veered off to its new objective. A thousand yards from it the 1st Platoon, under T/Sgt. Clarence Davis, contacted the first of several small delaying forces. Overrunning these, Fox Company, now thoroughly drained of strength, mounted the ridge and stumbled toward the crest. Three times Gilreath's men were stopped but on each occasion they managed to summon enough spark to push aside the enemy. Gathering itself for a single mighty surge, the company made its first assault successful: their poor physical condition would have precluded a second one. The hill was taken after a brief grenade duel. Parched and tired, the half-numb infantrymen dug in on the ridge top.

That night at 2200 the enemy launched a vicious counterattack against the north side of the perimeter. Light machine guns and 60mm mortars repulsed this drive but the Japanese returned in full fury a few minutes later. Charging past automatic weapons the Nips broke through the north side of the position, killing or wounding every man in that area. Troops rushed from other sections of the perimeter to plug this gaping hole. For three hours the battle waged back and forth, almost all of the fighting with bayonets, trench knives and grenades. Slowly Company F regained control of the situation, killing most of the invaders and forcing the rest to flee. Other assaults followed but were beaten back before they reached the perimeter. In the morning the gaunt riflemen arose from their foxholes and continued the mop-up of the area.

Meanwhile, the fight was all but finished along the Pugo-Tuba trail. Stripped of Hill 3000, Mt. Calugong, Hill Charley and now Machine Gun Hill, the Japanese defense split at the sides like a sawdust-filled dummy. Infantry assault had smashed the enemy's holding units. Artillery and air strikes had crushed his reserves and rear area installations. As E and G Companies left Machine Gun bound for Hill 4980, two miles southeast, they saw the terrific effects of prolonged artillery and air bombardment. Scores of Nip dead littered both sides of the trail. Draws and gullies serving as assembly areas were piled high with shell-torn bodies.

Only a few snipers shot at the 2d Battalion as it mounted the slopes of 4980. From the crest, which was secured unopposed, George Company spotted an old logging trail which led right to Tuba. Battalion told Rowland to follow it when notified of this discovery. Tuba was reached at 1700 on 25 April.

The "high road" was now behind the 123d Infantry. Two miles to the northeast, ready for the taking, lay Baguio.

## V

At 1200 on the following day the commanding officer of Company G received this message from Colonel Serff:

Employ Company G (reinforced) for reconnaissance in force to Mt. Santo Tomás and to commanding ground adjacent to Baguio—Santo Tomás road. This force will occupy Mt. Santo Tomás in the event of nil or light resistance. If enemy is in strength this force will contain it and report strength and location.

Captain Rowland's after-action report gave this account of the operation:

Company G numbered eighty-eight officers and men at this time. Rations had completely dwindled and it was necessary for the 3d Battalion—which closed on Tuba the previous night—to give us a one-day supply of food. The company was reinforced for this reconnaissance with a platoon from Company E, commanded by T/Sgt. (later 2d Lt.) Charles E. Gaines. We moved out at 1400 hours and proceeded to the junction of the Tuba Road and Baguio-Mt. Santo Tomás road without drawing fire. Here we split up and combed the ridges on both sides of the road. On one ridgeline an abandoned 90mm gun was captured with ammunition and instruments undamaged.

As the force neared a sprawling valley running perpendicular to the road, lead scout Charles LaVoie spotted five Nips ambling down the road in single file. The enemy noticed the company at the same time and LaVoie was forced to open fire. This alerted the Japs manning two hills to our right front—each one flanking an old house just off the road. T/Sgt. Eugene C. Lobodzinski's 1st Platoon went forward to investigate the closest hill and Lieutenant Werlin's men headed for the hill behind the house. Before either mission was completed machine-gun and mortar fire was received from the two terrain features. We silenced their machine guns but it was too late in the day to attempt to take the positions. Company G pulled back out of range and prepared positions for the night.

George Company spent the following day patrolling the two strong points. Rations were now exhausted and water was not available. Requested battalion to furnish both and two tanks or M-7s for close support before we proceeded on the mission. Water and rations came up just before dark. On 28 April at 0800 two light tanks and two M-7s, commanded by Lt. Stanley J. Balfrey, reached our perimeter.



*This Nip was corralled by Company G during its hike to the peak of Santo Tomás*

Lieutenant Regelman's 2d Platoon, with the LMG section attached, advanced on the closest hill at 0800 on 29 April. Its mission was to secure this piece of ground so that the remainder of the force could safely proceed along the road toward the peak of Santo Tomás. When Regelman radioed that he was in position to attack, the main body, accompanied by one M-7 and the two tanks, pushed across the exposed valley. The 2d Platoon quickly established a foothold on its objective. While it had the enemy engaged, the 3d Platoon cut off the road and mounted the second hill. One tank was able to advance and it blasted several caves and gun positions with point-blank 37mm fire.

Action lasted from 0900 to 1300. More than seventy-five Japs were annihilated on the two hills and in the valley. Company G sustained three dead and eleven wounded.

A company of Philippine Army troops joined the force on the 29th. Employing it to protect our flanks, we continued the march along the rough mountain road. Tanks were halted by the terrain and it became necessary to leave them behind. At an elevation of 6,200 feet—a small plateau a few hundred yards from the summit—we paused to reorganize. A decision was made to use this area as a base of operations. The 1st Platoon went out ahead to search out the Rest House on the very top of Mt. Santo Tomás. At the same time, the 2d Platoon followed a narrow road westward to Cubayo, a small *barrio* on the mountainside. Both groups had little difficulty in reaching their objectives. The only Japs encountered were stragglers who foraged for food in groups of two and three. After disposing of these enemy troops, the two platoons rejoined the company.

George immediately began its march to Baguio, meeting the rest of the 2d Battalion on Kennon Road west of the city.

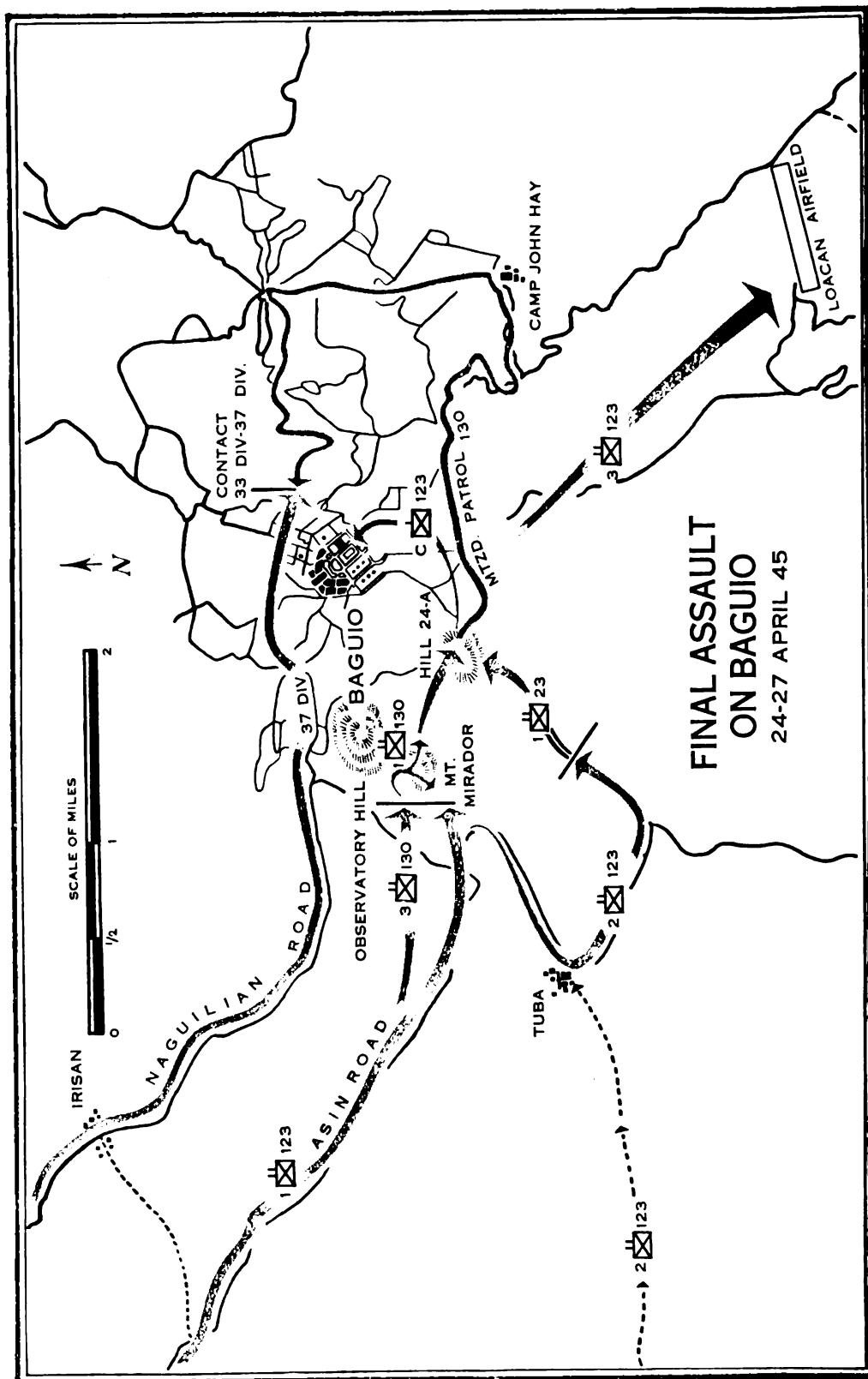
## Chapter 13: On to Baguio

**B**REAKING through the canalized Asin Valley and seizing 3000 and Mount Calugong cut deeply into the effective combat strength of the 33d Division, but once these key strongpoints were seized there was no sign of let-up in the drive toward Baguio. On the contrary, Golden Cross infantrymen pushed toward the summer capital with renewed vigor, anxious to erase the remnants of Yamashita's once powerful mountain defenses. Throughout the fighting on Luzon, Baguio had stood out in bold relief as the one word of hope of 33d doughboys. Its capture meant the virtual conclusion of I Corps activities on the island. Now that Baguio lay within striking distance, ground commanders found it unnecessary to fire up their men for the final attacks. The promise of rest and rehabilitation was sufficient incentive.

General Clarkson had reached for the summer capital from four different directions but by 22 April it became clear that only two of these drives would produce large-scale advances. On the Division right flank two battalions of the 136th Infantry encountered determined enemy resistance around Skyline Ridge and Tebbo where the Japanese 16th Reconnaissance Regiment was deployed in force. Five weeks of bloody campaigning were destined for the 136th before it could overpower the Nips in this sector. Colonel Cavenee's 3d Battalion, on the Kennon Road, could do nothing but tie up the enemy troops guarding the canyon route to Baguio. Huge gaps had been blown in the road by retreating Japs, all bridges were out and it was impossible for armor, artillery and supply trains to support a northward thrust launched from this area.

However, no such obstacles encumbered the 123d and 130th Infantry Regiments in the western segment of the Division zone of action. Only scattered pockets of enemy stood between them and Baguio. As Colonel Serff fought his force from Hill 4980 to the shadows of Tuba, Colonel Collins undertook the first step to effect the seizure of the summer capital.

During the final day of fighting over the Asin tunnels, "The Ripper" sent his 3d Battalion back through the Galiano Valley to Aringay for a brief rest, hot food and a change of clothes. His plan was to have this unit, together with the 1st Battalion, 123d Infantry (attached to him out of Division reserve for the attack on Baguio) hop on the now-famous Aringay-Bauang-Naguilian-Irisan "Merry-Go-Round." At the last-named *barrio* the two battalions were scheduled to detruck, cut southward to a point on the Asin road between the tunnels and Baguio and then attack toward the city astride the road. Lt. Colonel Faulconer,



mopping up the tunnel ridge with his 2d Battalion, had orders to advance eastward and make contact with these two battalions. He was also charged with eliminating Japanese stragglers caught between the two forces. The 1st Battalion, 130th Infantry, was to remain at Aringay in reserve.

Offensive action in the last phase of the Battle of Baguio began on the morning of 24 April. Quartermaster trucks had picked up the two assaulting battalions at 2200 the previous night and dropped them near Irian three hours later. Following a brief reorganization "The Ripper's" troops started through the blackness toward the Asin road. After an exhausting descent the force reached the rude, cobblestoned trailway to Baguio at dawn. With the arrival of daylight, Company B, 108th Engineers, began construction of a rough road in the wake of the infantry elements, permitting armor, artillery and self-propelled howitzers to join in the attack.

As Colonel Collins arrived at the jumpoff area he received a radio message from 2d Battalion headquarters stating that Faulconer's companies had met unexpected resistance just beyond the tunnels and would be held up until they could fight on through. Reluctant to halt the drive, the energetic Bostonian directed Faulconer to knock out the enemy and travel forward as rapidly as possible. Lt. Colonel Minton's 3d Battalion, deployed in a column of companies, had already started forward despite the gruelling all-night march. The 123d units, commanded by Lt. Colonel Coates, followed close behind in a like formation. Objective for the day: Mount Mirador, a few hundred yards southwest of Baguio.

By mid-day, the regimental commander realized that he could not reach his objective before darkness curtailed movement. The Asin road, treacherous and winding, offered the Japs numerous ambush locations. Maneuver was hindered by the nature of the terrain which rose sharply from the left side of the road and dropped off just as precipitously on the right. Riflemen were forced to take ambush parties by frontal assaults, sweeping in on the heels of a mortar barrage. Casualties were light but forward progress was heavily retarded.

In the course of this advance Colonel Collins and his bodyguard, Private First Class Gillespie, almost fell prey to the enemy. Trying to make contact with the 3d Battalion, "The Ripper," accompanied by Gillespie, left the 1st Battalion, 123d Infantry, and struck out at a rapid pace for Minton's headquarters. However, the gap between the two forces was now considerably wider than they had reason to expect. After several minutes of fast marching the two men found themselves



alone. At this point, a group of Japanese in a bypassed cave close to the road, opened up on them with rifle fire. Acting instinctively, Colonel Collins and Gillespie dove into a muddy ditch alongside the road, quickly worked forward for a few yards and then broke for a covered position on the hillside. Four Nips left the cave to search for them. Two proceeded up the road toward their hiding place while the other two headed for the deep gully below the road. "The Ripper" and Gillespie permitted the pair of Nips to move within point-blank range and then blazed away, killing them both. A few minutes later they were met by a 3d Battalion searching party which convoyed them to Minton's CP.

Here, gladdening news awaited the 130th's commanding officer. Faulconer had sent on word that he had broken through the enemy pockets and was now moving rapidly to reach the main force. At 1700, however, half of the spearhead—the 1st Battalion of the 123d—reverted back to its parent regiment. Colonel Collins immediately alerted his own 1st Battalion to leave Aringay that night so that it could participate in the attack on Mirador the following morning.

Just prior to nightfall the 3d Battalion reached the base of the last fringe of mountains encircling Baguio. Mount Mirador was a hundred yards to its front; a second peak, Observatory Hill, rose a quarter of a mile to its left front. Elements of the 37th Division, advancing along the Naguilian-Baguio highway, were currently engaged in heavy fighting on the northern slope of Observatory which commanded their route of approach to the summer capital. With long-standing orders to effect a junction with the 37th at the earliest possible moment, Minton dispatched a contact patrol toward the base of Observatory Hill. As the patrol proceeded up the road a few men could be seen on the southern slope of Observatory. It appeared to the patrol that this group was composed of 37th Division troops sent out to contact the Blackhawks. So that the two units did not shoot at each other, a couple of 3d Battalion men shouted, "Hey! We're from the 130th!"

The group on the hillside quickly replied—with Arisaka rifle fire and bursts from Nambu machine guns. It was a case of mistaken identity. They were reserves for the enemy unit fighting to keep the 37th from seizing the hill. To further add to the patrol's predicament, Nip machine gunners atop Mirador, to its rear, raked the troops with fire. Luckily, their fires were inaccurate and the platoon was able to withdraw without further difficulty.

Coupled with this unsuccessful effort came news from Faulconer that he was still several hundred yards short of a tie-in with the 3d

Battalion. In reply, Colonel Collins notified him to halt, dig in for the night, and continue forward at daybreak. The 3d Battalion stopped and built a perimeter at its farthest point of advance. Meanwhile, the 1st Battalion, 123d Infantry, en route to Tuba to join other regimental elements, stopped its march and dug in on the southern base of Mirador. Despite the stubborn opposition encountered during the day, the doughboys of the three battalions looked forward to a quiet night.

Unfortunately, the Nipponese gave the Blackhawks only a few hours to reflect upon this possibility. As soon as total darkness descended the jabbering of small groups of enemy could be heard from all sides as they worked their way through the draws and gullies attempting to pin-point the different perimeters. At midnight, approximately seventy-five of them stormed the Item Company perimeter, built on a grassy knob overlooking the Asin road. But for the heroism of one man, this attack would have carried through to the heart of the 3d Battalion installation.

Private First Class Clarence Schmidt of Company I, manning a light machine gun at the edge of the perimeter, was the first man to notice the enemy rushing forward. Shouting a warning to his mates, he quickly triggered the light .30, cutting down most of the first wave. Some broke through his fire, however, and flung two satchel charges close to his foxhole. Before they could do additional damage, other Item troops beat them back. Frustrated at their failure to break through, the Japanese withdrew. Men in the 130th position could hear one loquacious officer berate them for their lack of success. Then followed a few soothing phases, some scattered "*Banzais!*" and the enemy raced forward toward the light machine gun.

Again Schmidt caught them on their way in, working his piece at full cyclic rate. An enemy grenade found his foxhole and sprayed him with fragments but Schmidt disregarded his multiple wounds to keep the gun in action. Just as this assault began to disintegrate, a couple of Japs worked in on his flank and poured rifle fire into his emplacement. Hit several times, Schmidt refused to slacken his fire. For the second time he forced the enemy to back up. This accomplished, he collapsed across the light machine gun, mortally wounded. At dawn other members of the company found nineteen dead Nips heaped around Schmidt's position. He was posthumously awarded the DSC for his courageous devotion to duty.

While the 3d Battalion was warding off the enemy attacks, Lt. Colonel Talbott's 1st Battalion was on the Bauang-Naguilian-Irisan "Merry-Go-Round." Talbott reached the other regimental elements at

daybreak after a six-hour march. Despite the swift pace the battalion had maintained during its hike from Irisan to the base of Mirador, it was still fresher than the other Blackhawk troops. Consequently, when the attack on Mirador began at 0800, Talbott's men went out in front as the regimental spearhead. They met surprisingly slight resistance, and Baker and Charley companies were able to reach the 4,900-foot-high summit before 1030. It was apparent that the enemy, seriously weakened by his costly attacks of the previous night, had packed up and fled to the summer capital.

Equally important gains had meanwhile been registered by the three 123d Infantry battalions. Scarcely an hour after the seizure of Mirador, Lt. Colonel Coates' troops entered Tuba and eliminated a handful of Japanese defenders to secure the *barrio*. At 1700 elements of the 2d Battalion completed their Calugong-Tuba trek and made contact with one of Coates' detachments. Major Wolff's battalion had moved over the Naguilian road that morning with the mission of driving southeast from Irisan to Loacan Airfield south of Baguio. This move was to coincide with the combined attack of the 123d and 130th on the city.

Both regiments concentrated on a single intermediate objective—Hill 24-A, also called Dominican Hill—once Tuba had been secured and Golden Cross doughboys were entrenched on the crest of Mirador. Overlooking the business district of the summer capital, 24-A was the key to the entire Baguio puzzle. Possession of this mountain meant possession of the city. Located three hundred yards east of Mirador, only a sharply sloping gully separated this 5,100-foot-high bastion from "The Ripper's" troops. Colonel Serff's force, racing northeast from Tuba, was scarcely a mile away from 24-A's southern base.

With so enticing a target confronting them the two regimental commanders were reluctant to cease operations on 25 April until the first strides from Mirador and Tuba toward 24-A had been taken. Once the mop-up of Mirador was completed, Colonel Collins sent his 1st Battalion down the reverse slope in the direction of the next objective. The steepness of the mile-long decline, coupled with effective small-arms fire from 24-A, considerably slowed the pace and Lt. Colonel Talbott ordered his men to halt and dig in for the night at 1930. During this move the 1st Battalion, 123d Infantry, fought its way from Tuba to a point less than 250 yards from the hill. Here, however, Coates' companies came under fire from five Jap light tanks clustered on the side of 24-A in hull defilade. They were also forced to go into an overnight perimeter.

Preparations for a climax double envelopment of Hill 24-A began as



*Machine gunners of Company C, 123d Infantry, on top of Hill 24-A*

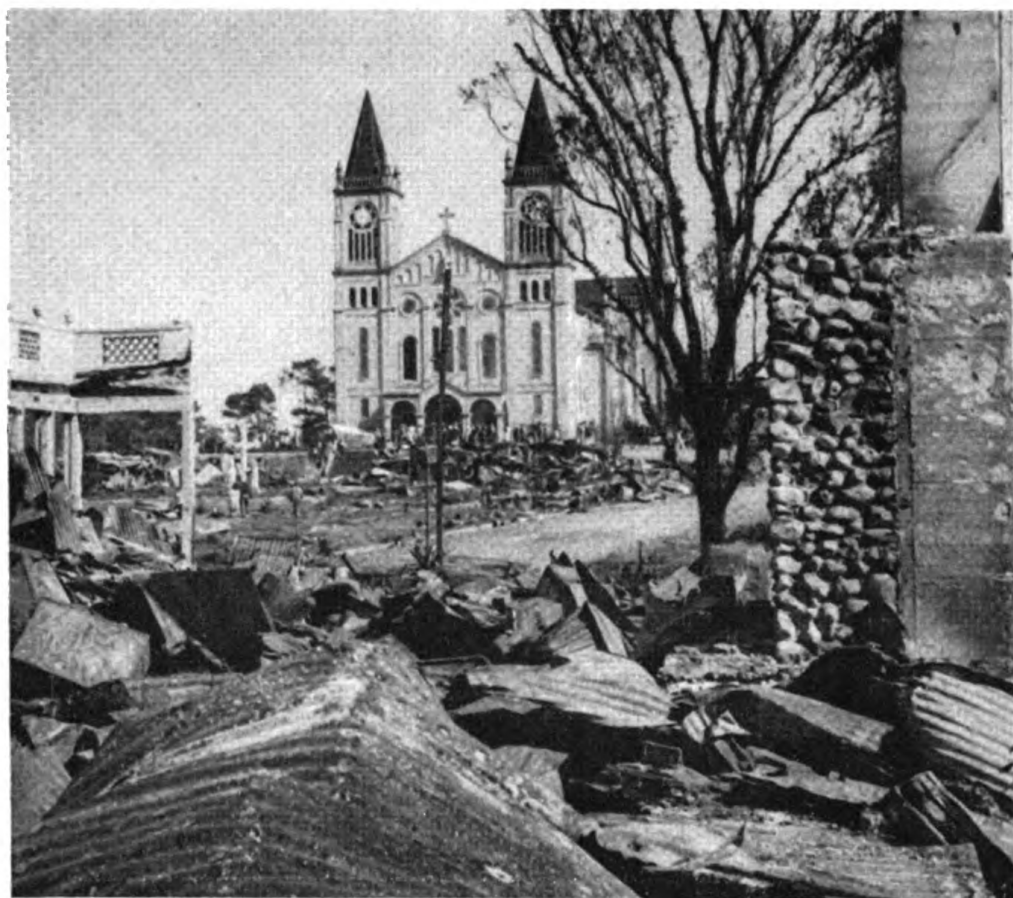
soon as the forward infantry units drew to a halt. Each regimental commander realized that fine coordination was imperative to tie in the actions of the two regiments. The onus, however, rested particularly with the two battalions of field artillery following the front-line troops in close support. So close were the enveloping prongs that it was conceivable that a slight inaccuracy on the part of the 122d Field Artillery—working with the 123d RCT—might damage Colonel Collins' effort. By the same token, "The Ripper's" supporting howitzers would need only a minor deviation from the target to cripple Coates' drive.

To insure proper coordination, General Paxton, in command of Division Artillery, strongly recommended to General Clarkson that the envelopment be effected under a single ground command. Recognizing the value of General Paxton's request, the Division Commander gave full responsibility for the success of the operation to Colonel Serff, senior regimental commander.

Shortly after dawn on the 26th, Division 105s and 155s threw a devastating preparation against the objective. To the doughboys waiting to jump off it seemed as though this barrage carried more authority than any other previous artillery concentration in Northern Luzon. Infantry-artillery coordination in the perpetration of the envelopment



*A motorized patrol ready to leave on reconnaissance of Camp John Hay*



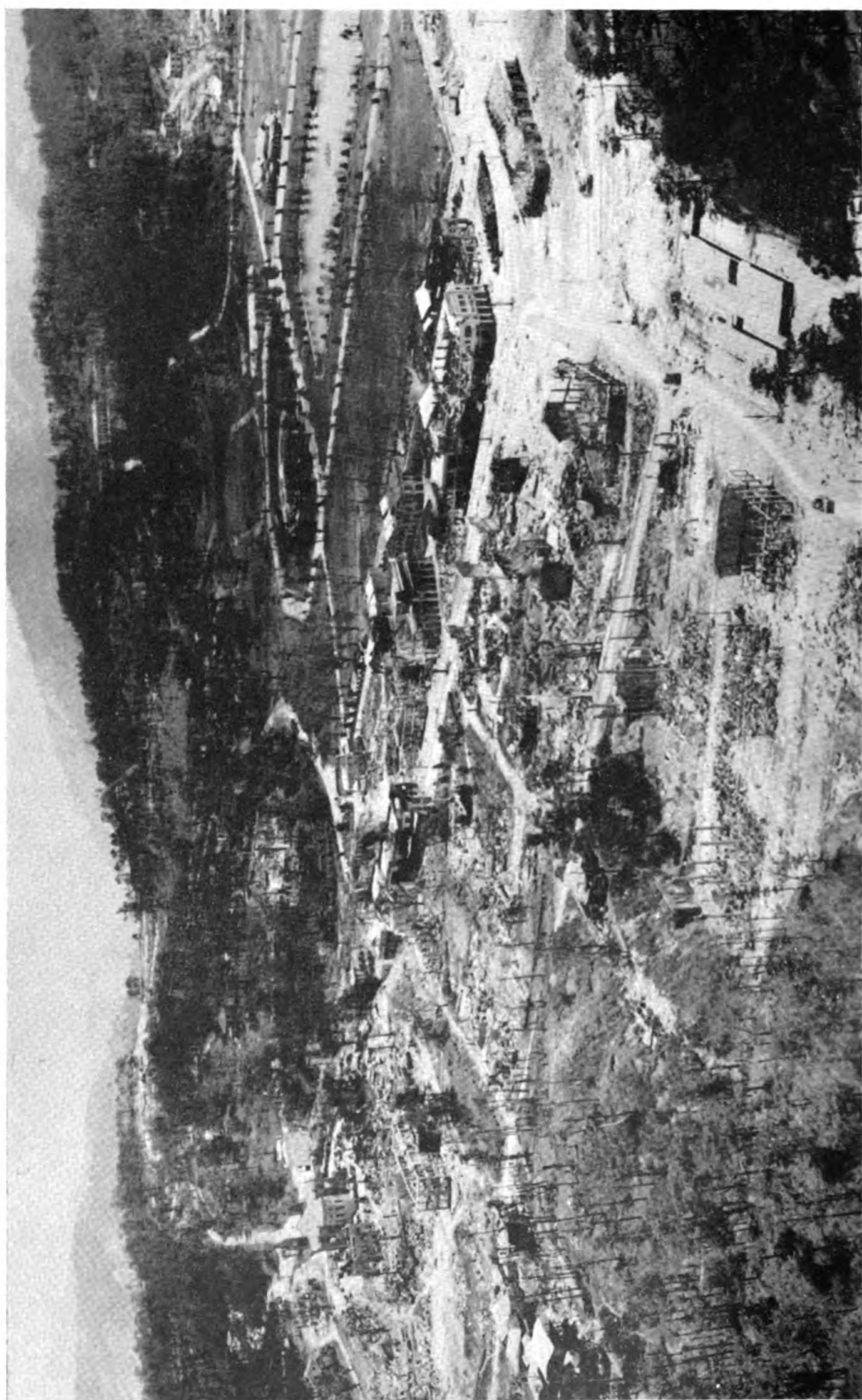
*The cathedral, only building of major proportions to survive artillery barrages and air strikes directed against the summer capital*

was a thing of beauty to watch. Always covered by howitzer fire the doughboys made a rapid ascent to the top of 24-A, against very light opposition.

Lieutenant Colonel Coates and his force passed the five light tanks that had proven so troublesome the day before. Now they lay shattered and abandoned by their crews. These armored vehicles seemed mutely symbolic of the Yamashita Line in its current state. Once the 123d and 130th met near the battered monastery on top of 24-A, Baguio was doomed.

Actually, the fighting on 24-A and the Division's subsequent entry into Baguio was in the nature of an anticlimax. Capturing the hill held nothing of the pain and sweat it had taken to carry the Division from the Caraballo foothills to the gates of the city. After eliminating a few stragglers hiding in the caves which honeycombed the hill, men of both regiments crowded to the northern crest, anxious for a view of the famous city. Baguio appeared as a perfect example of the chaos





*Baguio, as it looked on 27 April 1945*

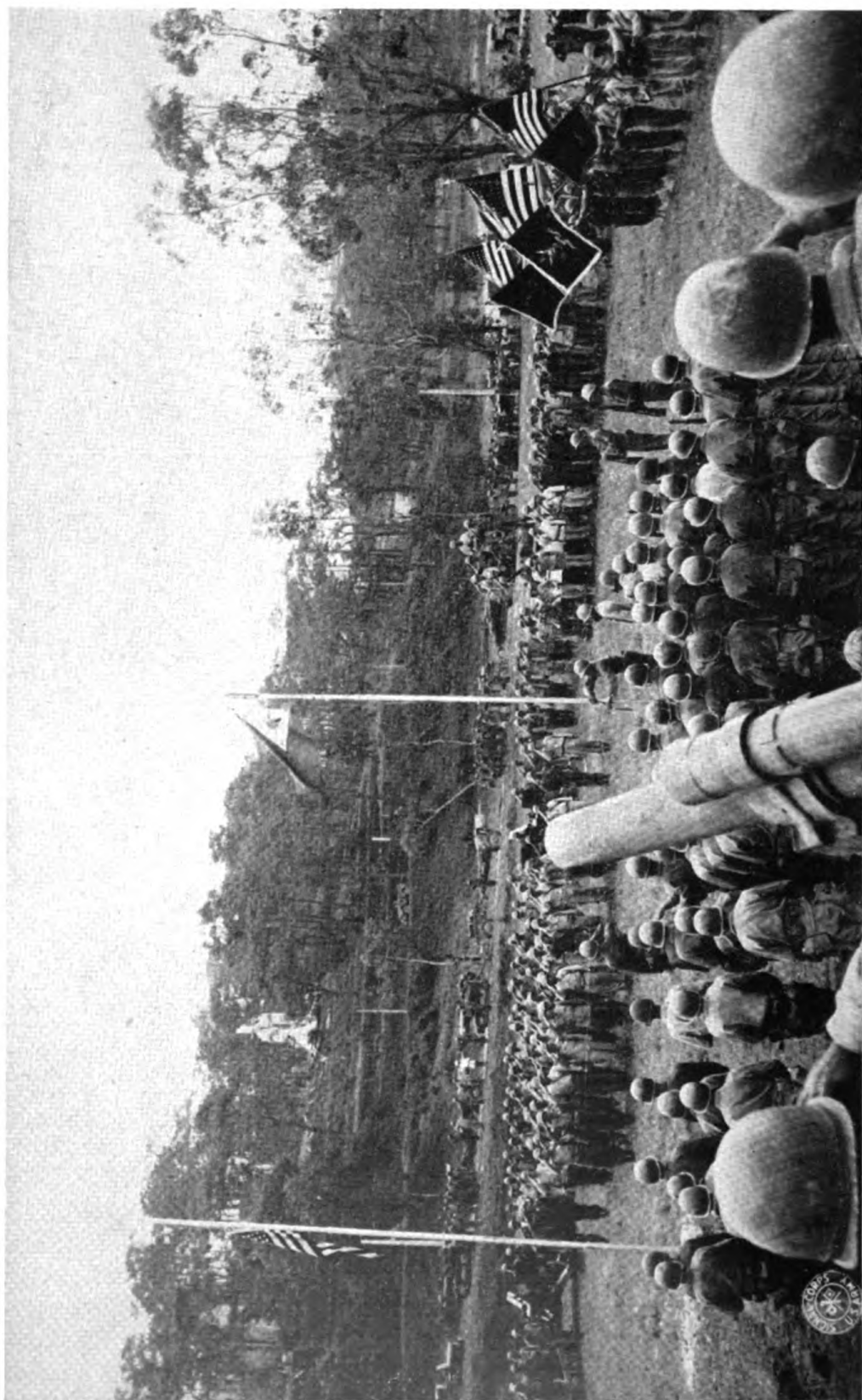


*A 130th Infantry patrol searches downtown Baguio*

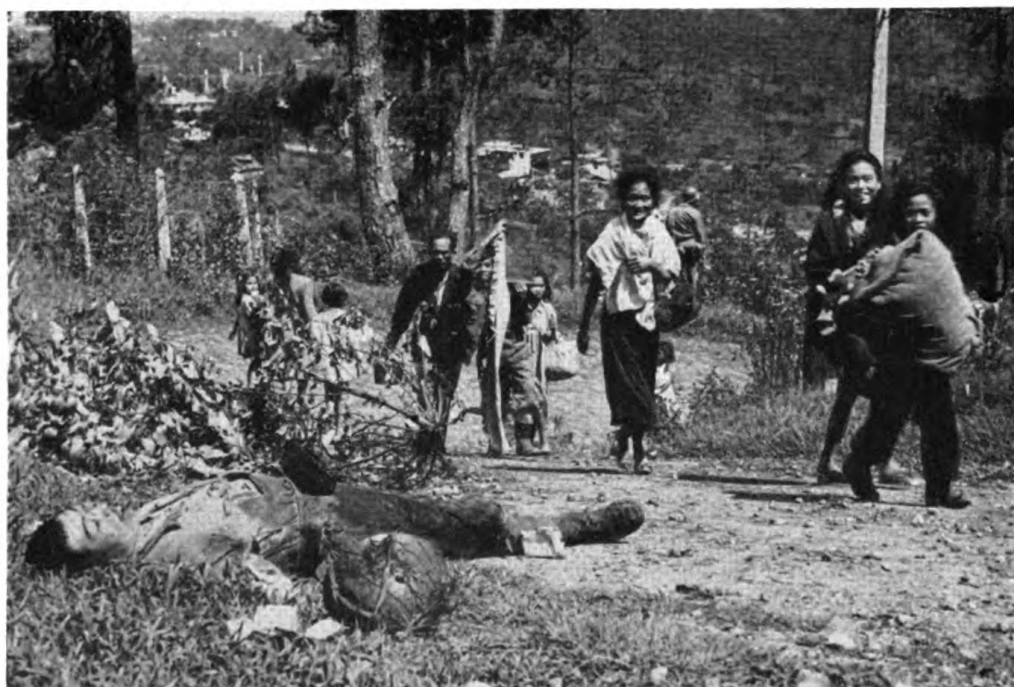
and destruction wrought by war. Its once beautiful Spanish-style buildings had been crumbled into rubble. Its streets were strewn with debris. The gray smoke of battle and the stench of death hung over the summer capital like a shroud. Across the city on the northern fringe of the plateau 37th Division patrols could be noticed picking their way through the pitiful ruins.

But through the mosaic of disaster that stretched before them, dough-boys could see the twin spires of the Baguio Roman Catholic Cathedral rise proud and erect like a priceless orchid in a patch of nondescript weeds. It seemed as though some Divine hand had protected the holy edifice from the tons of high explosive which had fallen on Baguio since February.

In the process of exploring Hill 24-A, a group of riflemen discovered the abandoned headquarters of General Yamashita. Tunneled in from the eastern slope of the hill, it consisted of more than forty rooms, all protected from American air and artillery bombardment. Residing underground did not reduce the high standard of living to which the Japanese had become accustomed since their seizure of Baguio in 1942. Each room was outfitted with fine furniture looted from Filipinos; electrical outlets had been installed; refrigerators were in abundance;



*U. S. and Philippine colors go up side by side during liberation ceremonies*



*Filipinos walk past the body of a dead Jap soldier as they return to their Baguio homes*

and the dirt floors of these caves were covered with expensive Oriental rugs.

Motorized reconnaissance patrols were organized on the afternoon of the 26th to comb the city before the Division's entry. However, shortly after the fall of Hill 24-A, word was received from General Swift, I Corps commander, to postpone the actual seizure of Baguio until 27 April. The general's reason for this order was purely psychological. Emperor Hirohito's 44th birthday fell on 27 April and the Corps commander could visualize added Jap demoralization if Baguio were wrested away on such a sacred occasion. Troops on 24-A had to be satisfied with digging in and training their automatic weapons on the summer capital.

Elsewhere in the Baguio zone of operations other elements of the 123d and 130th Infantry Regiments were quite active. Lt. Colonel Hilton's 2d Battalion had companies scattered from Mount Lomboy to Mount Santo Tomás engaging sizable enemy pockets bypassed in earlier fighting. The 3d Battalion, 123d Infantry, under Major Wolff, had branched off the Naguilian-Baguio road and was now in action around the Baguio terminus of Kennon Road and Loacan Airfield. Both areas were southeast of the summer capital.

First Division patrols into Baguio left the 24-A area on schedule the following morning. Colonel Collins dispatched a heavily armed force consisting of one rifle platoon, a section of M-7s from Cannon





*Loacan Airfield, south of the summer capital*

Company, heavy machine guns from How Company, a platoon of light tanks and a group of armored cars from the 33d Cavalry Reconnaissance Troop. Commanded by Lt. Robert G. Farmer, executive officer of Company F, this unit had the mission of clearing the southern half of the city. Charley Company, 123d Infantry, walked into Baguio at the same time that Farmer entered with his vehicles. Capt. Robert W. Moffett's men were charged with reconnoitering the outlying residential districts.

Scattered contacts were made by both patrols but neither found itself enmeshed in a serious skirmish. Enemy opposition was restricted to the inevitable handful of Japanese stragglers. For the first time in the campaign, prisoners were taken with ridiculous ease. Most of them were sick and wounded who had been left to perish by their comrades during the retreat from the summer capital. Highlights of these excursions came when Farmer's force made contact with a platoon from the 129th Infantry near the center of the city. This physical tie-in of 33d and 37th Division representatives officially marked the fall of Baguio.

Farmer's motorized group then veered eastward to Camp John Hay, formerly a popular United States Army rest camp. The once-immaculate installation was now an unrecognizable shambles. The few buildings which had managed to survive American bombing and strafing had been burned and gutted by the withdrawing Nipponese. Jap dead were found in countless cellars. In the basement of one partially destroyed residence fifty-five bodies of the enemy were discovered, all in advanced stages of decomposition. The rotting remains of Rising Sun battle flags were draped over each decaying figure. These corpses, lying face-up and in perfect alignment, provided the Division its most macabre sight in the Battle for Baguio.

Later in the afternoon of the 27th, General Swift apportioned responsibility for the Baguio sector between the two divisions responsible for its capture. General Beightler's unit was ordered to move north in pursuit of the enemy while the 33d Division was instructed to complete the occupation of the summer capital and its close-in suburbs. "The Ripper's" 2d and 3d Battalions poured into the city on the morning of 28 April, leaving the 1st Battalion on Hill 24-A as a security force. Faulconer's companies marched across the plateau and mounted Topside and Tiptop, a pair of 6,000-foot-high mountains which covered the northern entrances to Baguio. Lt. Colonel Minton's men turned to the east and moved on to high ground adjacent to Camp John Hay.



Occupation of these prominent terrain features completed the isolation of the Corps objectives. Now was the time to tie up all loose ends in the Division zone of action: effect contacts with 136th Infantry elements at Tebbo and Kennon Road, and sweep bypassed Japanese from their Bilbil strongpoint. With these points in minds, General Clarkson issued Division Field Order No. 19 on 27 April shortly after establishing his CP in Baguio.

Highest priority was given to the reduction of Japanese installations in the Tuba-Asin-Mt. Bilbil-Hill 4980 areas. Secondary priority went to the consummation of junctions between the 136th and other Division elements. Colonel Collins' regiment was assigned the mission of eliminating enemy resistance at Mount Bilbil and the Asin area in addition to reaching Colonel Cavenee's troops at Tebbo. As its 2d Battalion was engaged in and around Tuba and the 1st Battalion garrisoned Dingalan Bay outposts, the 123d's only new task was to join forces with the 3d Battalion, 136th Infantry, on Kennon Road.

Little difficulty attended the 123d's move down the road. Some die-hard Japanese, still holed up in the craggy bluffs overlooking the canyon, were encountered but easily dispersed by this pressure from the rear. On 1 May Major Wolff's riflemen met a platoon from Company K, 136th, near Honey Creek. Missions accomplished, both battalions returned to Baguio. With this phase closed out, Colonel Serff was finally able to assemble the better part of his regiment in the vicinity of Loacan Airfield.

Final junction was the one effected at Tebbo. Lt. Colonel Minton's 3d Battalion, 130th Infantry, driving south from Baguio via Itogon, established contact with 136th Infantry elements near Skyline Ridge on 5 May. To do this, it was first necessary to overrun the Japanese strongpoint at Tebbo which had withstood 136th efforts to push through to the summer capital. However, by hitting this position from the rear Minton's force experienced little trouble in knocking it out. Jap defenses had been geared to repulse only frontal and flanking attacks. The 3d Battalion remained in the Tebbo area, prepared to assist the 136th in the impending assault on Skyline Ridge.

Mount Bilbil was the one thorn remaining in the Division's side. Since mid-April a small detachment from Company A, 130th Infantry, augmented by a few Filipinos, had been able to contain enemy forces there from positions on Hill X. However, Bilbil Nips had gone virtually untouched throughout the fighting around Galiano and Asin. Colonel Collins realized that they would be rich in weapons and manpower. As a result, the force he created to return to Bilbil was bol-



*Golden Cross troops were joyfully received by Filipino prisoners of the Japanese*

stered with much of the assorted fire power at the regiment's command. Capt. William L. Mills, executive officer of the 1st Battalion, was given command of the composite group recognized operationally as Zebra Force. Mills' assault elements consisted of Company A, commanded by Lt. Albert J. Debnar; a Philippine Army rifle company; Antitank Company under Captain Beechinor, functioning as a regular line unit; the regimental I&R Platoon, led by Lt. Leonard L. Sharpe; and heavy-machine-gun and mortar sections from Dog Company.

Supporting elements included the 1st Battalion Medical Detachment; elements of Cannon Company in the role of service troops; Baker Battery, 124th Field Artillery Battalion; an air support group of sixteen P-51s with a ground liaison crew; and an additional artillery battery made up of two 90mm antiaircraft guns and a pair of captured Japanese mountain howitzers.

Zebra Force assembled in the vicinity of Galiano on the afternoon of 28 April. Here, Mills outlined his plan of attack to his subordinate commanders. Aerial photographs familiarized each leader with the peculiar formation of mile-long Bilbil whose crest gave growth to five towering knobs, unevenly spaced and separated by deep, bushy saddles. Running generally north and south, the forbidding mountain had Hill X for its southernmost knob. Mills quickly discounted the idea of a frontal assault aimed at running astride the long axis of Bilbil. Such a move was bound to be costly and probably unsuccessful. Companies F and C had tried it twice before—when the rest of the regiment was at Asin—and had been easily repulsed on both occasions.

Mills' scheme was to mount the ridge from its western side with the center knob as the force's first objective. Once there, the doughboys were to pivot and swing north, turning their strength against the two northernmost knobs on the mountain. With the far tip of Bilbil secured, Mills planned to return to the center of the ridge, reorganize, and then strike the one intervening knob separating his men from the 130th installation atop Hill X.

Under cover of darkness the Zebra Force left Galiano at 1900 on the 28th and moved toward the center of Bilbil's western slope. Field artillery pieces were already in position prepared to support the attack. The softening-up process had started earlier in the day when supporting fighter-bombers doused the knobs and draws with HE and Napalm. At 0200 on the morning of the 29th, Able Company, scheduled to spearhead the first attack, reached the base of its objective. Wearied by the seven-hour march, Debnar's men deployed and took turns sleeping until jumpoff time at 0600.

No supporting artillery fires prefaced Able's approach march up the mountainside. Captain Mills sought to gain his first objective by capitalizing on the element of surprise. Debnar's lead platoon actually negotiated the climb without being discovered, but as the first doughboys crossed the crest of the ridge they were observed by two enemy lookouts. Immediately, Company A opened fire on the Japanese guards thereby alerting the entire enemy garrison on Bilbil. A Nip light machine gun turned its fire on the intruders, but the platoon quickly smothered it and gained the tip of the knob. A short but furious battle took place here during which a second Nambu and a knee mortar were overrun. In securing its first objective, Company A accounted for three crew-served weapons and fifteen Jap riflemen. Zebra Force suffered two casualties.

Preparations for the defense of the center knob were under way as soon as it was cleared of enemy. The regimental I&R Platoon followed in the wake of Able Company and formed the nucleus of the installation. Since the force had sliced into the middle of the Japanese positions it was imperative that northern and southern flanks be given equal protection. Company A's light machine guns were trained on the hill to the south separating Hill X troops and Zebra Force. Heavies from Dog Company pointed northward, ready to support the attack on the next objective.

Able Company reorganized quickly and swept down into the saddle separating the knobs. As soon as the first men emerged, they were greeted by Nip Nambus but the Dog Company heavies were alerted

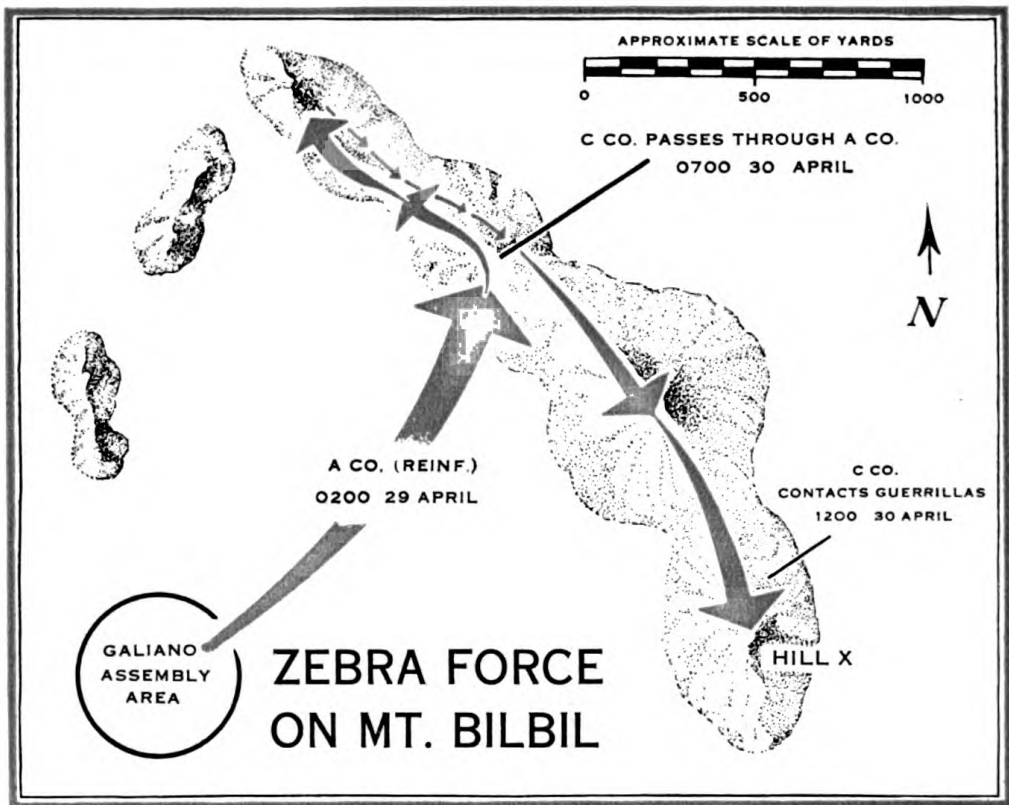
for a situation such as this. Before the enemy gunners could squeeze off more than two or three bursts they were riddled by fire from the center knob. Moving in under sustained overhead fire, Lt. Perry H. White's 3d Platoon rapidly fought its way to the top of the second objective, killing ten more Japs in the process.

One more knob remained to be taken before the force could retrace its steps and hit the southern part of Bilbil. Pausing only to regroup, a fresh platoon from Company A moved out in front of Zebra Force. Meanwhile, Company D's heavy machine guns had displaced forward and were in position to back up this latest assault. But here Able's luck ran out. The Nips, cognizant of the fact that they were next on the agenda, had all approaches to the hill covered with fire from automatic weapons. They waited until the platoon was only a few yards from its objective before opening up. In a matter of minutes the platoon suffered severe casualties and found itself pinned to the ground.

In this situation Captain Mills called upon his artillery forward observer for howitzer support. After a short preparation he again sent A Company forward. At the same time the Filipino company was committed to the fight. Members of this unit attempted to swing out to the right and drive in against the enemy flank, but the ridge side was too steep to permit such a maneuver. Both efforts were stopped cold. A platoon from Antitank Company, several yards to the rear, attempted to distract the Japanese with a display of fire power but the enemy refused to be taken in by this ruse.

Artillery seemed the force's only salvation. The FO with the task force directed heavy howitzer fire against the suspected machine-gun positions, but the Nambus resumed their staccato beat as soon as the barrage lifted. In desperation the FO asked his fire-direction personnel back at the guns to supply a rolling barrage for the infantry. This turned out to be the answer to the problem. By following the artillery fire as closely as possible the assault platoons were able to storm up the knob and catch the enemy gunners huddled inside their emplacements. The third attack yielded one Jap heavy machine gun, two lights, two mortars and twenty enemy dead.

Much mopping up had to be done on this hill as the Japanese had woven an intricate pattern of tunnels which stretched far inside the knob. Antitank passed through Able and accomplished most of this work. It was now 1300 and the first time since the jumpoff that the force had not been under Nipponese fire. Captain Mills took advantage of this lull to contact Cannon Company with a request for water, ammunition, and medical supplies. He also asked for Filipino



Map 22

carriers to remove the dead and wounded. Next Mills moved his troops back down the ridge to the center knob to prepare for the attack on the one remaining barrier.

Native carriers, accompanied by Cannon Company security detachments, reached Zebra Force at 1600 bearing the needed supplies. They hauled the dead and wounded back to Galiano on their return trip. As soon as water and ammunition had been distributed, Mills dispatched a platoon from the Philippine Army company to reconnoiter the dense woods covering the final objective. Again the enemy refused to react until the doughboys were scarcely a few feet away. Suddenly sustained fire from three machine guns snaked out toward the Filipinos, enfilading most of the column. Five riflemen were instantly killed and six others were knocked out by .31 caliber rounds.

Bilbil Japs switched their fire to the main force once the Filipino platoon had been crippled. From prone positions Captain Mills and his FO called back for artillery. During the shelling one platoon of Antitank Company inched forward and set up a base of fire while another tried a flanking attack. Unfortunately, the Nips recuperated in plenty of time to throw back this drive. Advance was impossible. Well directed overhead fire from the main body of troops enabled the

attacking antitank platoon to withdraw safely with its wounded. However, darkness was now but a few hours away so Mills decided to halt offensive operations for the day and dig in his force on the center knob. He again established contact with his rear echelon requesting that a second carrying party be sent forward to evacuate the casualties incurred in this last assault.

Captain Mills took stock of his force as it prepared to bed down for the night. Company A was exhausted to a man after a full day of climbing and hard fighting. His Filipino troops had been badly cut up earlier in the day and he hesitated to commit them on so vital an objective in their present battered condition. Mills realized that a fresh company could take the hill with much more facility. He radioed regimental headquarters, reported directly to Colonel Collins on the day's action, and asked for immediate reinforcement to insure the success of the operation. "The Ripper" promptly dispatched Company C, under Captain Kelly, to join Mills on Bilbil.

Carriers came up minutes before nightfall, collected the force's casualties and began the return trek to the Galiano area. Once they were out of friendly artillery range, Mills asked his FO to place intermittent howitzer fire on the target throughout the night. The close proximity of the explosions prevented the Blackhawks from getting sorely needed sleep, but they took solace from the thought that the Japanese had things much worse.

Kelly contacted Zebra Force shortly after daybreak. He and his men were veterans of Bilbil campaigning and needed little orientation from Captain Mills to acquaint them with the situation. It was quickly decided that Charley Company would make the main effort, supported by Company A ready to flank to the right if necessary. A heavy mortar and artillery concentration smashed into the objective as Company C deployed into its approach march formation. When supporting fires were halted Charley began to move to the thickly wooded knob.

Once the attacking company was swallowed up by the woods, Mills had no way of maintaining visual contact with Captain Kelly. From its position the task force could hear scattered rifle shots and an occasional burst of BAR fire. Less than half an hour after it cleared the line of departure, Charley Company radioed back to Mills' CP that the hill was in 130th hands. Scarcely believing his ears, the task force commander organized a small patrol and moved through the woods toward Kelly's men. It was not a false report. Stunned and shaken by the night-long artillery pounding, the enemy had abandoned his wounded to flee from Bilbil.



Elements of the task force wasted no time in moving southward, and establishing contact with friendly troops manning Hill X. With this junction, Captain Mills was able to radio Colonel Collins that Zebra Task Force had accomplished its assigned task. "The Ripper" ordered Mills to conduct a final mop-up of Mount Bilbil for the rest of the afternoon and then evacuate the ridge. At 2000, 30 April, the force was on its way back to Baguio for a deserved rest.

## Chapter 14: Skyline Ridge

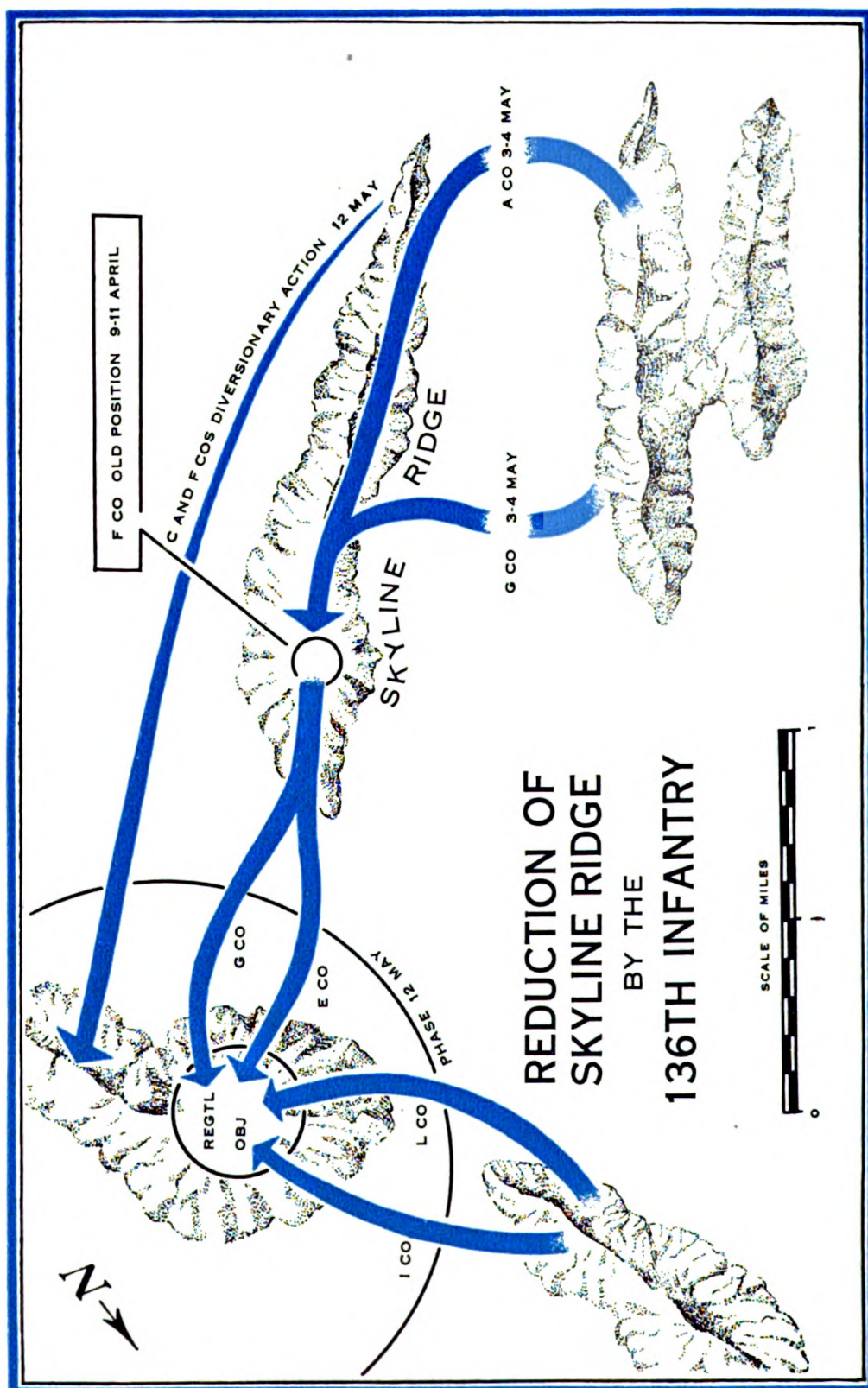
LUZON was one of the hottest spots in the Pacific during the last days of March. The Jap had been crushed at Manila, the city he shamelessly pillaged and sacked in 1942; General Swift's I Corps was engaged in keeping him penned up in the mountains surrounding Baguio; the XIV Corps, under Lt. Gen. Oscar W. Griswold, had overrun his southern strongholds in the Manila sector. Luzon had long been sliced along its middle and the enemy was slowly being reduced into a series of pockets. North of the Central Plain, however, where the I Corps sector was divided among the 33d, 32d and 25th Divisions, he still remained a powerful adversary.

Just as the Golden Cross faced the utmost in difficult terrain and fanatical opposition, so too did the other divisions comprising the corps. On the Villa Verde Trail, which splits the long axis of Northern Luzon, the Red Arrow Division was locked in a death struggle with a strong Nipponese force. Enemy artillery and mortars inflicted severe casualties on the 32d and their gains paralleled those of the 136th Infantry on Kennon Road. To the right of the 32d, the 25th had equally slow going. Maj. Gen. Charles L. Mullins' Tropic Lightning Division, working through canalized Balete Pass, also took a daily beating from Japanese heavy-caliber weapons. Action in the zones of all divisions was bitter. Advances were totalled in feet and yards, never miles.

Yamashita realized that if I Corps managed to fight its way into the Cagayan Valley—northeast of Baguio—the Luzon war would be all but over. The valley housed the nerve system of the enemy's northern force. His ammunition and food stockpiles lay in the fertile flatland; the road through the valley represented his principal line of traffic for reinforcements and supplies. Keeping a foothold in the mountains resolved into a life-and-death issue with the Japs. They had to hold or eventually perish.

Consequently, the Nip fought with all of his great courage throughout the Corps sector. He employed his artillery and mortars with more skill than ever before. He attempted to stem the American tide with the cream of his foot troops. Even to him, a decisive victory must have appeared impossible to attain, yet the vision of a stalemate in the barren mountains was enough to spark his efforts. With his back to the wall, the enemy still had dreams of one day sweeping out of the mountains and recapturing Luzon in a single dazzling counterstroke.

In late March the Corps commander reshaped the divisions' zones in a move to eliminate the possibility of the enemy-desired stalemate. Seeking to increase pressure along the Villa Verde, he directed that



elements of the Golden Cross take over the Tebbo area from a regiment of the 32d Division. Tebbo was west of the trail and the troops tied up there were sorely needed by Maj. Gen. William H. Gill for his main effort. Once freed from flank security duties, this regiment could conceivably represent the balance of power in Villa Verde fighting.

General Clarkson alerted the 130th Infantry to move to Tebbo and relieve the Red Arrow regiment. On 28 March the 2d and 3d Battalions of "The Ripper's" force turned over their positions on the Naguilian road to the 129th Infantry and trucked from Naguilian to San Manuel, a hundred miles away, to take up the new mission. Front-line positions at Tebbo were located at the end of a deep salient which had been pushed northward along the Ambayabang River from San Nicolas through Lawican and Santa Rosa to the ridges south of Tebbo. The crude jeep trail that was maintained to supply the Tebbo elements followed the river bank and ended in a gap between two ridgelines cradling the Ambayabang, about 3,500 yards short of Tebbo. This gap leading into the valley housing Tebbo was called just that: The Gap.

Tebbo is a small mountain village at the foot of a huge barren hill shaped in the form of a half-oval. Town and hill peacefully nestle in the scenic Agno River Valley. The hill, which served as a picturesque backdrop for the deserted *barrio*, was pocked with Japanese caves and spider holes. It quickly earned the name of "Hand Grenade Hill" because of its oval shape.

Both Blackhawk battalions relieved 32d Division troops at 1850 on 4 April. Major Askren's 2d Battalion took over positions on high ground a thousand yards west of The Gap, while Lt. Colonel Minton's force defended a knob on a towering ridge east of the valley. This huge ridgeline was known as Skyline Ridge.

This latest disposition of 33d Division troops stretched the Golden Cross front from Naguilian to Tebbo, a flank-to-flank distance of sixty-five miles. The obstacles of terrain on Kennon Road, the Naguilian road and Pugo zones had already turned communication and supply into paramount problems. Extension of the Division zone pressed an even greater strain on these already taut lines.

A simple mission fell to Colonel Collins' battalions: Patrol and make full report of activity, strength and location of the enemy's Tebbo force. During the next four days riflemen from the battalions patrolled ceaselessly, meeting no organized bands of Japanese. Only four or five stragglers were sighted. Skyline Ridge was disturbingly serene.

Lack of Japanese activity at Tebbo posed a G-2 brain-twister. Intelligence information from higher headquarters disclosed that more than

1,200 enemy troops infested the area. The major part of the Japanese 16th Reconnaissance Regiment was reported to be defending the network of ridges surrounding Hand Grenade Hill. This regiment had a record of aggressive action. In early March it had been committed from Baguio to stop 32d Division advances through the Agno River Valley. It accomplished its mission. The Red Arrow men were forced to dig in and hold on Skyline Ridge. Despite this knowledge of previous Tebbo activities, the 130th Infantry reports read, "No enemy at Tebbo."

Only one conclusion remained. The enemy was using his Tebbo troops as a shuttle force, running from the Agno to dangerously pressed Japanese strongpoints and then back again once the pressure was alleviated or the strongpoint lost. A road running from Baguio through Itogon provided the Nips with a relatively secure route for these shuttle movements. Obviously then, at the time the Blackhawks assumed new positions in Tebbo, the Nips were off on one of these shuttle missions. Either that or they were able to conceal themselves from the prying eyes of two entire battalions.

While the 130th was at Tebbo, the 123d and 129th Infantry Regiments were finding tough sledding as they fought toward Baguio in the main effort against Yamashita's headquarters. Additional troops were needed to add impetus to the Division drive. General Clarkson decided to pull the Blackhawks back into the Battle for Baguio. With no enemy activity on Skyline Ridge, nothing could be gained by tying up a fresh, battle-wise force. Still, Corps had ordered 33d Division troops to man the inactive area. The Golden Cross CG issued orders to the 136th Infantry to replace the 130th on Skyline Ridge. Colonel Cavenee handed the mission to 2d Battalion, resting at Sison after weeks of heavy action along Kennon Road. A tour of duty on Skyline Ridge would give this combat-weary unit a chance to relax.

Two days after its relief on Kennon Road, Lt. Colonel Haycock's battalion trucked from its Sison rest area to San Manuel. A company of Filipino troops and a platoon from the Reconnaissance Troop were attached. Company F, commanded by Capt. Sheldon O. Suess, a forward observer party from Corps' 694th Field Artillery Battalion—which passed to the Bearcats from the 32d Division troops—one platoon of heavy machine guns from How Company, the recon platoon and the Filipinos were sent forward to The Gap to effect the relief. The battalion command group, and Companies E, G and part of H remained at San Manuel.

As soon as the relieving unit reached The Gap, elements of it

branched off in different directions. Captain Suess led his company and the artillery party onto Skyline Ridge where a relief of the entire 3d Battalion was made. The cavalrymen, led by Lt. Irving Silverhart, and the Filipinos took over positions on the right side of The Gap where Major Askren maintained his headquarters. Lieutenant Silverhart fortified a steep hill rising sharply from the valley floor. This terrain feature levelled off at three points in its upward climb. Small flats at these level spots gave the impression that they ran perpendicular to the sharp sides of the hill. The Filipinos dug in on the lowest plane while Lieutenant Silverhart and most of his platoon took the intermediate location. An eight-man outpost fortified the highest point.

Lieutenant Colonel Minton and Major Askren led their battalions back to the regimental base at Aringay following their relief by 136th Infantry units. Captain Suess spent the few remaining daylight hours of 9 April in consolidating the Company F position. Sandbags were gathered and filled, barbed wire was tightened and moved to afford best protection. Booby traps were installed along all avenues of approach to the perimeter. Even in a sector reputedly as quiet as a church social Captain Suess meant to take no chances. A month on Kennon Road had taught his entire outfit that the Japs were trickier than a stageful of Houdinis.

Tebbo's tropical heat finally melted into the cool of night and quiet settled over Skyline Ridge. As the hours passed uneventfully the only sounds to be heard were the heavy breathing of infantrymen and the occasional click of an M-1 safety as the guard was changed. Fox Company slept well for the first time since being committed on Luzon. The fear and anxiety of combat were missing. Blackhawk patrols had likened Tebbo to a mausoleum. Absolutely nothing doing. It looked like a quiet sojourn in the mountains.

At 0100 a sudden roar of machine-gun fire split the black night. It seemed to come from everywhere. Fox Company snapped awake just in time to hear the belching of enemy mortars lend regular punctuation to the long beat of the Nambus. It took only a moment to read the score. From a small knob a hundred yards north of the perimeter, doughs could see tongues of red-and-white flame spitting from the muzzles of Nip machine guns. Fox Company troops immediately ducked back into the cover of their holes. It was impossible to remain exposed for more than an instant as mortar fragments sprayed all parts of the perimeter.

A "quiet" sector had abruptly turned into a holocaust. The enemy must have seen the one undermanned company relieve an entire bat-



talion. Taking instant advantage, he had marshalled his forces under cover of darkness and driven home a surprise blow.

Fox Company was too stunned to offer immediate resistance. However, the crash of grenades raining on the outer line of emplacements a moment later shocked the men into action. Light .30s poured out answering fire, traversing along the protective wires. How Company's water-cooled guns turned on the Jap positions and tried to cut down the enemy fire at its source. Mortarmen dropped HE shells in close to the perimeter. The 694th Artillery observer made contact with his fire direction center at Lawican and called for defensive fires.

Sergeant Al Patterson, in charge of company communications, vainly cranked a dead EE-8 phone in an effort to get battalion on the line and notify Haycock of the company's plight. Next he tried the SCR-300, but it too was dead. Captain Suess took over at this point. He crawled to the artillery -610 radio and got the 694th FDC to relay his messages back to the battalion commander at San Manuel. Lt. Colonel Haycock promised assistance.

Even though defensive artillery and mortar preparations shredded the turf surrounding the small position, the tempo of enemy fire gradually accelerated. Soon the din was so great that the high-pitched crack of the Nambus and the more deep-throated answer of American machine guns blotted out all other sounds. Infantrymen in the outside line could suddenly see the whole hillside spring into life. The enemy had succeeded in weathering the protective supporting fires. Once past this curtain they rose to their feet, worked through the wire and stormed the position.

Captain Suess' men stood erect in their foxholes to ward off this thrust against the perimeter. Their M-1s crackled, grenades were pitched into the tightly packed Nip ranks. But soon the enemy worked in so close that it was impossible to use M-1s as anything but clubs. Rifles were reversed, bayonets removed from pieces and employed as trench knives. It became a hand-to-hand fight to the death. The screams of wounded and dying Japs echoed through the night. Fox Company fought back the "*Banzai!*" shouting Japanese to avoid being overrun. The encounter lasted until dawn when the enemy brought down a mortar barrage and withdrew under the blanket of fire.

Daylight brought many revelations. As Company F made its first visual reconnaissance it could see scores of dead Japs sprawled in the ten-yard stretch of ground between the barbed wire and the company position. But that wasn't all. For every lifeless Nip around the perimeter, three live and healthy ones had assumed positions of siege.

In the course of the night the enemy had thrown a cordon of troops around Company F. Japanese emplacements could be seen in all directions.

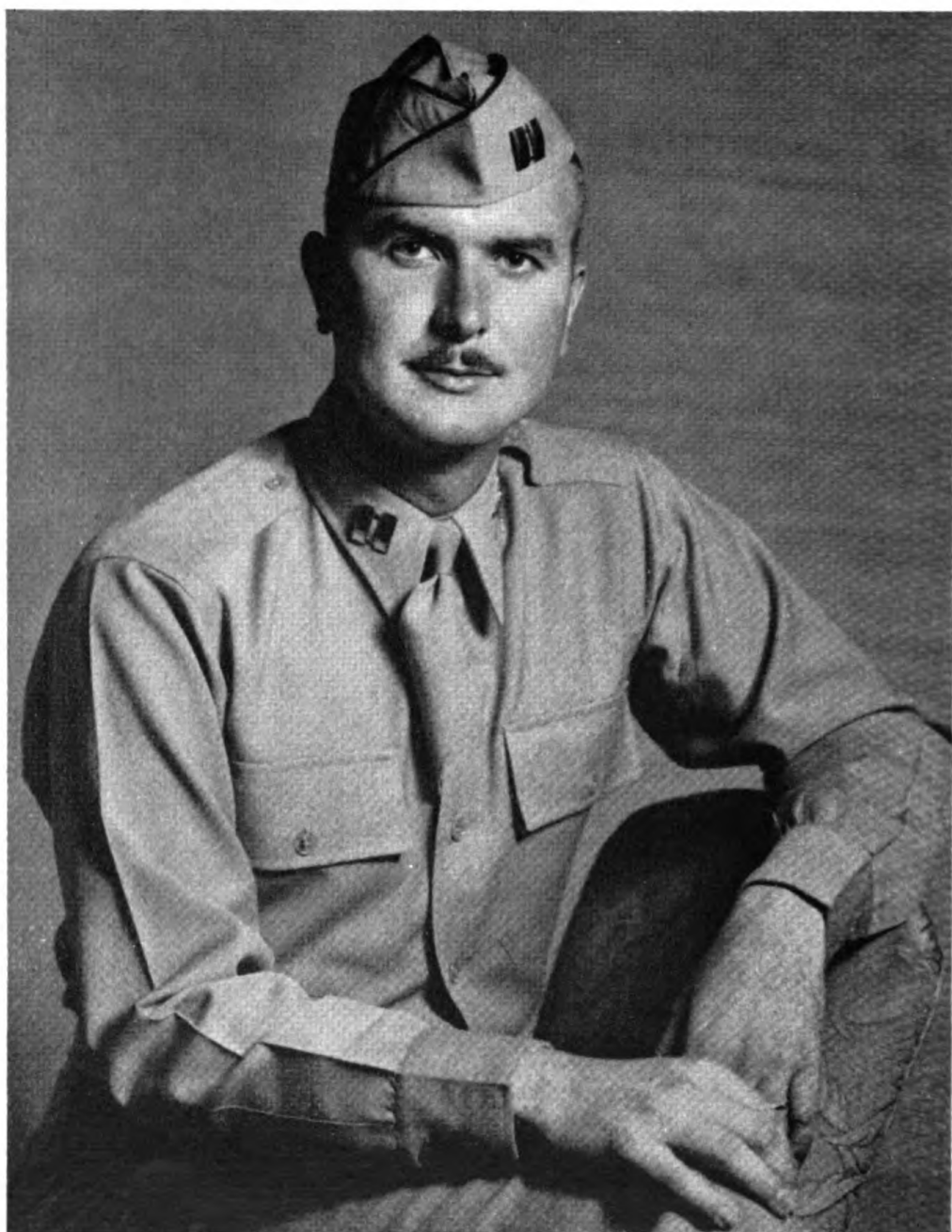
Company F was surrounded.

Other Division units in the sector fared as badly. The attack against Fox Company must have served as a signal for activity on the other side of The Gap. Coincident with the Skyline Ridge attack other Nips hit both Recon Troop perimeters. The larger group of troopers, halfway up the hill, managed to beat back all drives made in their direction. But the smaller unit, located near the crest of the mountain, had too little in the way of weapons to stand off an attacking Japanese platoon. Twice the Nips were stopped, but on their third attempt they overran the tiny Recon position. One trooper was killed, one lost in action, and the remaining six, all wounded, were forced to withdraw from the position and seek cover in a nearby gully. The Nips took over the ground and all of the squad's weapons; a 60mm mortar, an EE-8 phone, two rifles, two submachine guns, a pistol, and three carbines.

On Skyline Ridge, Fox Company found itself in desperate need of supplies and ammunition. A night of fighting had greatly depleted the outfit's store of small-arms rounds, mortar shells and hand grenades. Supply trains were dispatched from the battalion base at San Manuel but they could find no entrance to the surrounded company. Japanese troops had all avenues of approach zeroed in with automatic or crew-served weapons. An air drop was the only solution if Company F was to continue the fight for its life.

A C-47 loaded with the necessary matériel flew over Skyline Ridge that afternoon. Large quantities of the requested supplies were kicked out through the plane's cabin door, but only a few items landed within Company F's perimeter. Water, small-arms ammunition and mortar rounds were recovered by Captain Suess' men; the enemy got all of the food, radio batteries, and the sorely needed hand grenades.

Fully realizing the seriousness of the situation, Captain Suess utilized all his available support to see his company through this crisis. He called back to the artillery FDC and requested that an L-4 plane fly constant patrol over the ridge and relay any information on enemy activity to the company CP. The Cub pilot immediately left the San Manuel strip and appeared over the company a few minutes later. No sooner had his reconnaissance started than he spotted enemy movement on the reverse slope of a small knob near the Fox Company perimeter. He radioed Captain Suess: "I can see approximately forty



*Captain Sheldon O. Suess*

Japs, with a machine gun and mortar, digging in about sixty yards south of you. Will adjust on them."

Captain Suess decided to pull the unexpected and follow up with a small attack of his own. As soon as the artillery barrage lifted, a six-man volunteer combat patrol from the company crawled through the wire and charged up the side of the knob. The very audacity of

the attack made it a success. The patrol brought concentrated M-1 and BAR fire into the enemy group and then withdrew back to their perimeter. Again the liaison plane came in: "You got about thirty of them. The rest took off. That's the way to knock 'em off!"

Riflemen worked feverishly to improve their defense for the attack they knew would be coming once darkness closed in on Skyline Ridge. Each man deepened his hole. Crew-served weapons were more firmly sandbagged into place. Supplementary positions for all guns were constructed. The artillery radio, last surviving link of communications with friendly forces, was carefully emplaced, nothing but its aerial remaining above ground level. Came dusk. Fox Company waited. Minutes stretched into hours and still only an eerie silence hung over the ridge.

Then it came. With the same explosive fury of the previous night the enemy moved forward against the thin line. The flash of exploding demolitions and grenades cast a brilliant glow over the ridge.

"*Banzai!*" Japanese screaming in English and their own tongue again crawled through artillery and mortar concentrations. They penetrated the wire in several places. Rifle butts, knives and a few grenades were used once more to turn them back. Captain Suess left the company CP to shuttle his men between weak points in the line. Just when it seemed as though a group of Japs would be able to carry their salient along the diameter of the perimeter, Suess and a few men would rush up and blunt the Nip wedge. Heavy machine gunners, using a swinging traverse, augmented the efforts of the riflemen by raking the wire with point-blank fire.

Again the fight raged until morning. When the first slivers of light appeared the enemy withdrew, dragging away as many of his dead and wounded as he could safely carry. The perimeter was still intact, and the Nips had taken a brutal beating in their effort to annihilate Company F. More than 150 Japanese, piled up three-high in some spots, could be counted around the barbed-wire fence. Captain Suess had seven men killed and eight wounded during this one night of action.

Daylight brought the supply situation into sharp focus once again. Troops were hungry and thirsty. Wounded men rested quietly but medical supplies were necessary if they were not to die. Another drop was made at 1000 that morning, and was more successful than the one the day before. Company F recovered enough ammunition, water, food, morphine and plasma to enable them to stand another day of siege.

Immediately after the drop, weary infantrymen braced for a third

attack. Captain Suess called Lt. Colonel Haycock by radio and was in the midst of assuring him that the company would not only survive but hold its ground when a single shot rang out. Company F's commander slumped forward, dead, blood trickling from a small hole in his forehead. Several months later the widow of the Rockford, Illinois, officer was presented with a DSC, posthumously awarded to Captain Suess for his leadership during the attacks of 9 and 10 April.

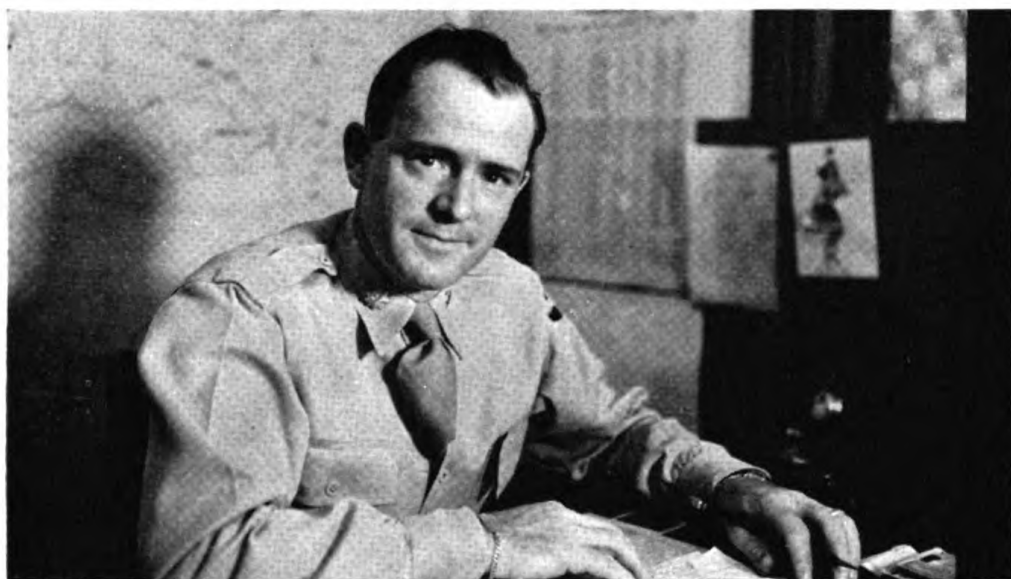
Command of the force passed to Lt. Sidney Stein, the next ranking officer.

Battalion was not idle during Fox Company's fight for existence. On 10 April Companies E and G were given the mission of breaking through to the marooned unit. Trucks took both companies up to The Gap and from there they struck off into the hills on foot. Lieutenant Weatherwax, in command of Company G, planned to hit Skyline Ridge several hundred yards below Lieutenant Stein's position and then work his way along the ridge top until a junction was made. Captain Sherrard, commanding E Company, meant to follow a direct line from The Gap to the surrounded outfit's position.

Both E and G failed. Weatherwax's doughs had just set foot on the ridge when they were engaged by mid-range machine-gun fire. Heavy mortars, never before used on the ridges, opened up from defiladed positions and caught the company in the open. Weatherwax, a game leader, moved out past the scouts hoping to pull his troops along with him. His men responded, but the spark shone only briefly. Enemy fire superiority crushed every attempt to advance when George came to within six hundred yards of Company F. Company G was forced to withdraw with its twenty-one casualties.

Sherrard had no better luck. His force was observed by Skyline Ridge Japs as it was crossing the broad valley leading up to the ridge-line. Plunging machine-gun fire pin-pointed Company E in the valley and all attempts to advance were fruitless. Heavy mortar fire commenced to fall on Easy Company at this point and Sherrard and his troops were forced to turn back.

Since all efforts of the 2d Battalion to break through to marooned Company F had failed Lt. Colonel Haycock was left with a single choice. He radioed Lieutenant Stein to withdraw from the ridge that night, under cover of darkness. Plans called for mortars at The Gap and howitzers at Lawican to shell the enemy throughout the day, enabling Company F to mask its preparations for the move. A two-battery artillery concentration was to fall on three sides of the company from 1940 to 2000. At 2000 the trip back was due to begin.



*Lieutenant Colonel William M. Haycock, CO, 2d Battalion, 136th Infantry*

Preliminary fires started on schedule. Medics with Company F readied the wounded for the long carry to friendly lines. Crew-served machine guns and mortars were destroyed with hand grenades as the steady barrage kept the enemy down and prevented observation into the perimeter. The two-battery concentration came through at the appointed hour. Fox Company's communications men destroyed the -610 radio one minute before 2000.

Silently the troops slipped through the wire in the rear of the perimeter and began the return march. All wounded—litter and walking—made the move, but the stretcher-laden column was forced to leave behind the bodies of its eight dead.

With the destruction of the artillery radio, no communication existed between battalion headquarters and Company F. The 136th Infantry literally had a "lost company." An air of tension was apparent at The Gap where Companies E and G and forward CPs sweated out the dawn. Even on Kennon Road where the 3d Battalion, 136th Infantry, had its hands full near Camp Three, doughs there offered a prayer that Company F would make its withdrawal without further mishap.

Fifteen minutes after Fox Company's rear guard cleared Skyline Ridge the Japanese inaugurated their third all-out attack in as many nights. But this time sharp enemy fires went without response. The Japs were baffled to find just the bodies of eight Americans when they crawled through the barbed wire and searched out the position. Had they chosen to follow Company F, the enemy might have been able to accomplish more in one brief attack than they had in two and a half



days of relentless siege. Progress was slow. Footing was insecure in the inky night. Sgt. Pyrl Christensen, lead scout, was ordered to make frequent halts. The loaded line could walk only a few paces between rests. At last dawn came, lighting the way over the steep chain of spurs leading down from the ridge.

Regiment and battalion held hopes that Company F would reach friendly forces shortly after daybreak. Contact patrols were dispatched in all directions; commanding ground was manned by OPs searching the ridges and ravines for a glimpse of Stein's unit. But morning wore on to mid-afternoon and still no message, no sign of the missing company. Colonel Cavenee and Lt. Colonel Haycock, too filled with anxiety to wait for periodic reports to reach the CP, travelled from one high point to another, querying observers.

Fox Company was spotted as the broiling sun was ready to sink below the western horizon. Every man at The Gap let out a spontaneous cry of gratitude at the sight of the pitiful column stumbling out of a deep gully. Surgeons and medical technicians rushed out to intercept the company. Filipino carriers sprinted ahead to take over the load of the litters and to assist the walking wounded.

A nightmare was over. The return trip to The Gap had taken almost twenty-two hours of marching. Usually brusque Colonel Cavenee wept as the tattered infantrymen dragged themselves up to The Gap. He walked out to meet them, shaking hands with some, pounding others on the back. Trucks were waiting and the men were quickly driven back to San Manuel for rest, medical attention and re-equipping.

Now the Tebbo picture no longer posed a puzzle. It was obvious that the enemy moves to and from Tebbo were finished. They were here to stay. Both sides of The Gap were heavily fortified and Hand Grenade Hill, confronting the 136th Infantry, blocked forward progress. With appalling suddenness a major front of alarming proportions had developed in the 33d Division sector. And if early signs meant anything, the Japanese would fight to the death before permitting a new route to Baguio to unfold through the Agno River Valley.

More troops were quickly brought up to the new battleground. Major Ehrlich's 1st Battalion, resting at Camp One after weeks on Kennon Road, reached The Gap at dusk on 11 April. Troops were moved into position after dark. Company C joined E and G in developing positions on the right side. These units were aligned on a long, low ridge running parallel to Skyline Ridge and separated from it by a 1,200-yard-wide valley. Able and Baker Companies dug in west of The Gap,



*A 2d Battalion squad returns from a successful patrol*

just below the high point formerly held by the eight-man squad from the Recon Troop. Guns of the 210th Field Artillery Battalion were brought up to Lawican to augment the fires of Corps artillery. The regiment busied itself in amassing sufficient power to actively respond to the Japanese challenge.

Supply and evacuation became critical problems as the Tebbo force doubled in size. A single regimental supply installation could not serve both the Kennon Road and Tebbo elements of the regiment. Major Joffre H. Boston, S-4, moved the greater part of his service troops to San Manuel, and left a small auxiliary base at Camp One to take care of the 3d Battalion. An agreement was worked out between Major Boston and 32d Division supply personnel whereby a Red Arrow base at San Manuel would receive 136th Infantry stocks of food, ammunition, water, medical supplies and other combat equipment. Service Company and 1st and 2d Battalion supply units were charged with transporting this matériel up to the Tebbo front.

This assignment in itself proved difficult. The supply line was nothing but the rough-hewn jeep trail used by the 32d Division when it first garrisoned the Skyline Ridge area. The rutted road led into the winding Ambayabang River seventeen times before reaching The Gap. Supply trains were open to fire during most of the 25-mile run. Grassy

bluffs overlooking the route housed countless Nip harassing parties. These groups would bide their time until the trucks reached one of the fords and then move forward in an ambush. It took genuine fortitude to drive a supply vehicle from San Manuel to The Gap.

Evacuation posed an equally formidable difficulty. In addition to inviting ambush, the evacuation route provided a strength-sapping series of jolts to the wounded in the course of the four-hour ride to the 32d Division's clearing company. Until these problems were solved, there was little point in attempting to recapture the lost ground.

Regiment came up with a workable solution in both cases. Colonel Cavenee detailed his platoon of attached medium tanks to convoy supply trains forward, and then guard a combined ambulance-supply group on its return trip. Mounting 75mm guns and with .30-caliber machine guns ready to comb the hills and draws along the road, the tanks discouraged further enemy harassment of supply trains. The regiment lost nothing by committing its armor in this fashion. Steep terrain flanking The Gap blocked their employment as tactical support. Roadblocks erected at particularly exposed points on the road—manned by antitankers and battalion headquarters troops—assisted the tanks in eliminating enemy resistance.

Charley Company, 108th Medical Battalion, commanded by Capt. Louis F. DeGaetano, alleviated the medical problem. These medics were moved to a point five miles behind the front, where they set up an installation in a wide field near Sapinet. Captain DeGaetano's men discarded their normal role of collecting company and operated as a full-fledged, albeit small, field hospital. Major Karl Beck and Capt. William E. Hurt, surgeon and assistant surgeon for the Bearcats, incorporated their regimental aid station with Company C. Doctors Beck, DeGaetano and Hurt, assisted by Company C's technicians, stood ready to provide surgical attention to wounded who were too seriously hurt to weather the jolting ride to San Manuel. Beds and tents were prepared to house casualties such as malaria and exhaustion cases.

To further speed evacuation, Major Beck recommended that a landing field for light aircraft be constructed right in the company area. Engineers came up and bulldozed a strip in a short time. Corps was contacted and L-5 ambulance planes were made available on call. In the ensuing days on Skyline Ridge many American lives were saved by the Sapinet station. Filipino troops under an American officer were assigned to defend the airfield and installations against enemy intrusion.

Now the stage was set for the 136th Infantry to strike back.

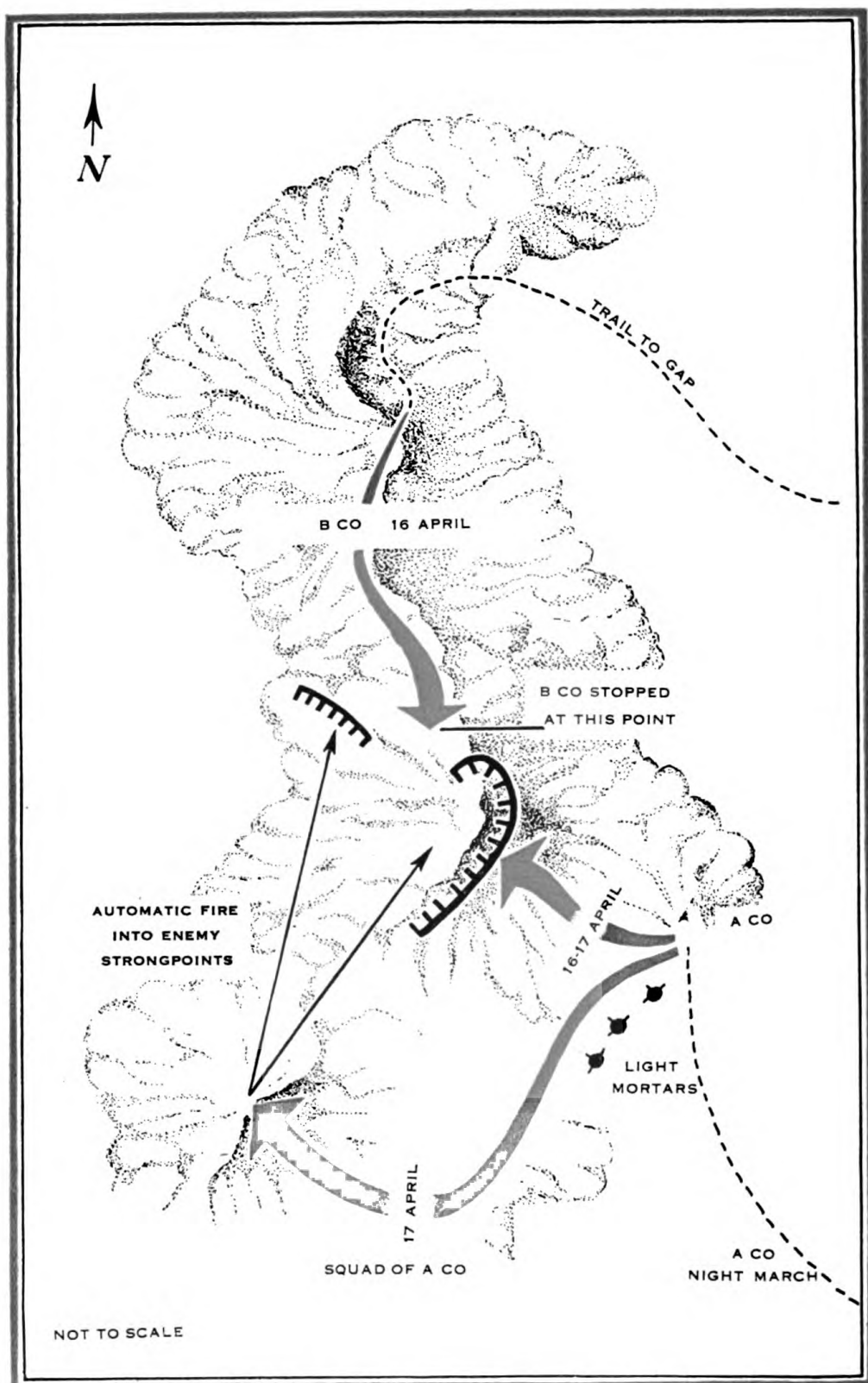
In order to secure the left flank of The Gap it became imperative to

regain the high ground lost by the cavalry outpost. Companies A and B were alerted for this mission. Shortly after midnight of 15-16 April, Company A moved out and secured a small knob below the Japanese from which an attack could be launched. Captain Kissel's company swung around the base of the hill and prepared to attack in a southerly direction at dawn. Both companies attacked at daybreak. Baker Company ran into a dead end at once. Dropping down from the side of the objective was a sheer escarpment about thirty feet high. It could not be seen from the ground as it was concealed by a grassy spur jutting out of the hillside. Captain Kissel had no alternative but to back down the hill and start up again directly behind Company A.

Captain Cavender's company got no better results. The enemy spotted Able Company as soon as it began its climb. Machine-gun fire hemmed in both sides of the unit. Loath to continue a frontal attack because of its costliness, Cavender pulled back to his jumpoff position and called for a barrage of artillery and mortar fire. All that day and night the company sat tight, waiting for the steady HE bombardment to loosen up the Japanese defense.

Cavender led his men forward again on the morning of 17 April. He had a new plan for this attack. Some three hundred yards behind the enemy, and on a slightly higher plane, was a small rocky pinnacle about ten feet high. If a few men could outflank the Nip force and squeeze into the crags on this narrow peak they would be able to throw effective fire into the enemy's rear. The resultant confusion would assist the remainder of the company to gain a breach from the front. Company A moved out a short distance from its original position and then engaged the enemy in a fire fight. T/Sgt. Fred Mitchell's light machine guns opened up on the enemy's Nambus and engaged them in a duel. Meanwhile, a squad from the 2d Platoon slipped out of the line and took advantage of the melee to branch off to the left flank.

Slowly the squad advanced along the side of the hill. Surprise was everything; detection meant isolation. But the enemy paid no heed to the group swinging around behind him. Every Nip weapon was turned against the rest of Company A. Finally the flanking squad reached the base of the pinnacle and swiftly sought covered positions among the crags. A moment later two BARs, two submachine guns, and a few M-1s opened up. The position was perfect. Every movement of the enemy garrison could be seen. Shocked Nips wheeled around searching for the source of this surprise attack. Some attempting to move away from this surprise fire were cut down by Company A. Others who sought to converge on the pinnacle were shot down in their tracks.



Map 24: Action west of The Gap

Japanese confusion was the signal for the main assault. Able Company infantrymen moved into the enemy position and mopped up the stupefied survivors of the vise. Eighty-seven Japanese were slain, most of them accounted for by the single squad on the pinnacle. Captain Cavender lost two men: Sgts. Waldemar W. Walk and Arthur C. Keyster. Three men were seriously wounded. Equipment recovered on the hillside indicated that the enemy had committed his first-rank troops in this area. Break-down rifles and collapsible submachine guns offered unmistakable evidence that the dead Nips were members of parachute or glider units.

Able Company's drive cleared the west side of The Gap. This recaptured terrain was of vital importance. So broad was its area of observation that it was possible for Captain Cavender to adjust fire on Skyline Ridge. Company A's peak was much higher than the ridge manned by C, E and G Companies and observers could see over their heads to the big ridge.

Aggressive patrolling by small groups began on 15 April. On that date a 24-man joint C and G patrol, led by Lieutenants Winston and Weatherwax, pushed on to Skyline Ridge, first regimental units to set foot on the ground since Company F. The patrol managed to cross the wide draw unobserved. Upon reaching the base of the ridge, riflemen deployed into a wide skirmish line and began to ascend the hillside. It seemed odd that no alarm was sounded. The steep sides of Skyline Ridge were utterly bare of cover or concealment. Suddenly the troops from C and G rushed over the crest and fell prone into firing positions. Bunched up on a small spur leading off the opposite slope were thirty Japanese. A "commence firing" was given and in an instant rifles, BARs and submachine guns spoke up together. The enemy was too surprised to return a single shot. They were wiped out, almost to a man.

Other Nips reacted strenuously to this uninvited entrance. From emplacements farther up the ridge—close to where Fox Company had been trapped—numerous machine guns turned their fires on the patrol. Jap knee-mortar squads cut around both flanks and began to lay in fire. Heavy mortars and concentrated fire from enemy riflemen came next. Rifle, machine-gun, and knee-mortar fire contrived to keep the C and G patrol pinned flat to the ground while the heavy mortars dropped a barrage just behind the thin skirmish line. The din set up by this terrific concentration was so great that the two lieutenants, only eight or ten yards apart, were forced to talk by radio in order to coordinate their actions.



Despite this small-arms and mortar bombardment the patrol remained in its position and actually maintained the initiative for a few additional moments. Sgt. Haskell M. Garrett, a Charley Company squad leader, spotted the muzzle blasts of the Nip heavy mortar section. Both guns were located directly behind the spur housing the forty Japs killed when the patrol first ascended on the ridge. Garrett shouted to his platoon leader for friendly 81mm fire. His request for fire was radioed back and a round was on the way in a few seconds. It fell at the correct range but some sixty yards left of the target.

Sergeant Garrett rose to his feet to sense the round and then called for additional shells. Finally he worked a round into the suspected position. Garrett then asked for six to come together. Jap shrieks of pain could be heard as the volley bit into the reverse slope. The blast of exploding ammunition was audible across the valley as the Japanese HE dump went up in a sheet of flame and gray smoke. From that time on the enemy mortars were silent. Sergeant Garrett, killed a week later on another patrol, received the Silver Star for his gallantry.

By this time, however, the light machine guns and knee mortars were pretty well registered on the patrol. Both leaders deemed a withdrawal advisable as the reconnaissance mission was already accomplished. Lieutenant Weatherwax radioed back for overhead machine-gun fire to cover the unit as it backed away from the enemy. As soon as the last man had crawled back over the crest, eight .50s and a like number of .30s placed fire on the ridge top. The mortars adjusted by Garrett shortened range and continued to fire. C and G made an uneventful return trip. Overhead fire did not cease until they reached the safety of their own positions. At the cost of two men wounded by knee-mortar shrapnel, this patrol accounted for almost thirty Japs and at least one heavy mortar.

As a result of this episode, regiment was able to determine that the Japanese held all of Skyline Ridge, not just the portion occupied by Company F almost a week before. It was assumed that the enemy ran in troops and supplies from Baguio each night. On 19 April this belief was substantiated. Observers from the 2d Battalion notified the regimental CP that they could see supply trains and columns of troops coming onto the ridge from the direction of the summer capital. These moves were boldly carried out around mid-afternoon. Artillery FOs, at the various OPs, called for interdicting fire, but the extreme range for high-angle fire nullified the effect of the howitzers.

Corps' 105s were displaced forward in an effort to capture some of these remunerative targets. Colonel Cavenee directed that two guns

be hauled up to The Gap at dawn, kept there in firing position during the day, and moved back to Lawican at dusk. They struck a bonanza the following day. A liaison pilot sighted a large enemy truck convoy far up the Agno River Valley near Dalupirip. He ranged in the howitzers and destroyed a large part of the column. Ninety Nips were estimated to have been killed. Immediately an entire battery from the 694th Field Artillery was permanently displaced up to The Gap.

Activity around Skyline Ridge grew static on 21 April. The enemy seemed content to hold his strongpoint and wait for the 136th Infantry to inaugurate any aggressive moves. Occasionally he harassed C and G Companies with sporadic machine-gun fire and mortar fire, but that was all. Regimental units retaliated with mortar fire. Colonel Cavenee chose this lull to relieve his 2d Battalion, less Company E, and send it back to San Manuel as I Corps reserve. In a redistribution of troops Company C moved over to the west side of The Gap, formerly held by Able and Baker, while Companies E, A, and B manned the long ridge across the draw from Skyline Ridge.

A week of defensive patrolling followed from these new bases. Then the regimental commander considered the time ripe to feel out the enemy in Tebbo and on Hand Grenade Hill. At this time elements of the other Golden Cross infantry regiments were actually engaged in Baguio City. Reports indicated that the summer capital would be in American hands within twenty-four hours. General Clarkson naturally desired Colonel Cavenee to effect a rapid breakthrough so that the entire Division could finally be mustered in one area.

Staff Sergeant (later Lt.) William Nielson, in command of the 1st Battalion Assault Group, was given the mission of probing the small *barrio*. He left The Gap with his unit on 28 April and started down the massive Agno River Valley towards Tebbo. Nothing happened until the platoon reached a broad area of flatland where the river suddenly cut across the valley floor. Large paddies, formerly tended by Igorot inhabitants of Tebbo, stretched out from the northern bank of the stream right to the huts that made up the *barrio*. The scouts crossed the stream at this point and after a few minutes of investigation waved to the remainder of the group to ford the river. Three Jap machine guns and four knee mortars chose this moment to commence their fires. Most of the assault group was caught in the stream. Two men were killed in the first bursts. Sergeant Nielson tried to outflank the fires and advance but was unable to do so without being detected. He called for artillery fire and then withdrew to The Gap.

Another attempt to penetrate to Tebbo was made the following



*A surprise Jap mortar barrage sprays 1st Battalion positions in the Skyline Ridge area*

morning by a Charley Company platoon led by T/Sgt. James Dickson. This unit met the same fate as the assault group. Gathering false confidence from the fact that no resistance developed as he approached the river, Dickson crossed in the same fashion as Nielson. His platoon too was caught in the middle of the Agno. Two more men were killed before the group was able to pull back out of machine-gun range.

Two quick failures were convincing proof that the job was too large for a single rifle platoon. The task was passed on to Company B. But Colonel Cavenue expanded the mission to correspond with the enlargement of the attacking force. Captain Kissel had orders to break through Tebbo and drive on to Baguio. He was reinforced and supplied with sufficient men and ammunition to cope with any situation arising during the northwest advance. One rifle platoon from Company C, and sections of heavy mortars and machine guns from Dog Company rounded out the assault force. An FO party, headed by Lt. Thomas Monsour, was prepared to provide artillery fire support. The Division pack train, made up of United States Army horses recaptured from the Nips near Sison, was used to haul crew-served weapons and heavy ammunition. Before the landing on Luzon these animals had pulled artillery caissons for the Japanese.

Kissel left The Gap on 1 May. For the third time in as many

attempts no opposition was encountered until the forward elements spanned the Agno. Again the enemy waited until the attacking force was split into two sections before cutting loose with accurate machine-gun fire. Company B tried to work across the open ground in twos and threes, but the nature of the terrain permitted the enemy perfect observation. As soon as the Japanese spotted movement they traversed several of their pieces to engage advancing troops. When this method of advance failed, attempts were made to go forward by fire and movement with the leading platoons deployed into wide skirmish lines. The result was the same. Company B could not locate a single enemy machine gun. Meanwhile, the long rank of doughboys afforded a splendid target to Jap gunners.

All attached resources were employed to force a salient. Lieutenant Monsour covered the far end of the valley with battery volleys; chemical 4.2 mortars and 81s brought fire on Hand Grenade Hill; heavy machine guns fired hundreds of rounds into the deserted *barrio*. Captain Kissel sent his support platoon around to the right during the barrage, hoping to catch the Nips napping. As soon as it crossed the river the platoon was intercepted by machine-gun fire and beaten back. All day long Baker Company stayed astride the river and took it, searching for some way to knock out the Japanese fires.

Colonel Cavenee, in contact with the company CP, finally ordered Captain Kissel to abandon the drive and return to The Gap.

The return march turned out to be a harrowing experience. Once darkness settled over the valley not a flicker of visibility remained. There was no moon, no stars; only pitch blackness. Lead scouts moved forward blindly. Once out of the valley the path hugged the side of a long ridge running from The Gap to the river. Occasionally the route trailed off into sheer drops. Men were reduced to crawling on hands and knees to avoid falling off the trail into a deep gully. Movement was slow, gaps developed in the column, a man could not see a yard in front of him. During one of the frequent halts an alert doughboy suddenly spotted some luminous limbs on a bush growing out of the ridge side. A fungus growth covering the bark gave them the phosphorescent glow of radium-dialed watches. They were quickly broken up and passed along the column. Troops inserted them inside the rubber camouflage bands at the rear of their helmets.

Officers opened their compasses and left the exposed dial dangling from the rear of their web belts. Pieces of the twigs were fastened inside the harnesses of the pack animals. Contact was maintained through the employment of these "beacons." Two horses slipped off

the trail during the remainder of the trip, but all men and casualties made it back to The Gap without mishap.

Reverses at Tebbo were hard to swallow but they were soon absorbed in the fervor of preparations for the attack on Skyline Ridge. Once the main ridge was in regimental hands it would then become a simple matter to outflank Hand Grenade Hill and knock it out from the rear. Toward this end, General Paxton offered Colonel Cavenee all of the artillery support he could use. One artillery battalion, the 123d, was dispatched from Baguio to Dalupirip—a *barrio* north of Tebbo—with the mission of bringing 155mm fire on the reverse slope of Skyline Ridge. Impervious to high-angle fires from The Gap because of its near-perpendicular slope, the ridge side served as a haven for a large number of enemy troops. Corps relieved the 2d Battalion from its reserve when word was received that the regimental attack was imminent. With this comparatively fresh force to count upon, the 136th command group formulated its plan for the capture of Skyline Ridge.

Able and George Companies were nominated to spearhead the assault. Company A was to cut around the southern tip of the ridge, move up the slope and attack along the north-south axis of the ridge. Lieutenant Weatherwax's company was ordered to move directly across the valley from its present position and drive a wedge through the middle of Skyline Ridge. This accomplished, Cavender would then push on past Company G and take the old Company F position which was the regiment's first objective. Planners counted on employing the element of surprise to give the two companies a foothold on the ridge. The approach march was to be made during the hours of darkness. No preliminary fires would be laid down, although they were to be available on call.

At 0400 on 3 May the twin columns moved out. Silently they advanced across the valley and inched up the slopes of Skyline Ridge. When several yards short of the crest the men stopped and flattened themselves against the hillside, waiting for the first flicker of daylight to illuminate the terrain. Signals to attack were issued precisely at dawn. Still working quietly, the two companies completed their approach marches and then spilled over the crest. Before the Japanese could diagnose the situation both A and G had secured the long-denied foothold.

Enemy confusion was short-lived however. Machine gunners on higher ground turned their weapons to counter the intrusion and responded with long, accurate bursts of fire. In an instant all enemy forces on Skyline Ridge were marshaled against A and G. Two Nam-

bus—one on high ground to its left-front and another to its right-front—hemmed George Company between lanes of crossfire. One of Weatherwax's scouts, Pfc. George Rollins, spotted a narrow tunnel running from both guns to a centrally located OP. Rollins got to his feet and ran through the bands of fire toward the OP. Five yards from it, he pitched a hand grenade through the small embrasure.

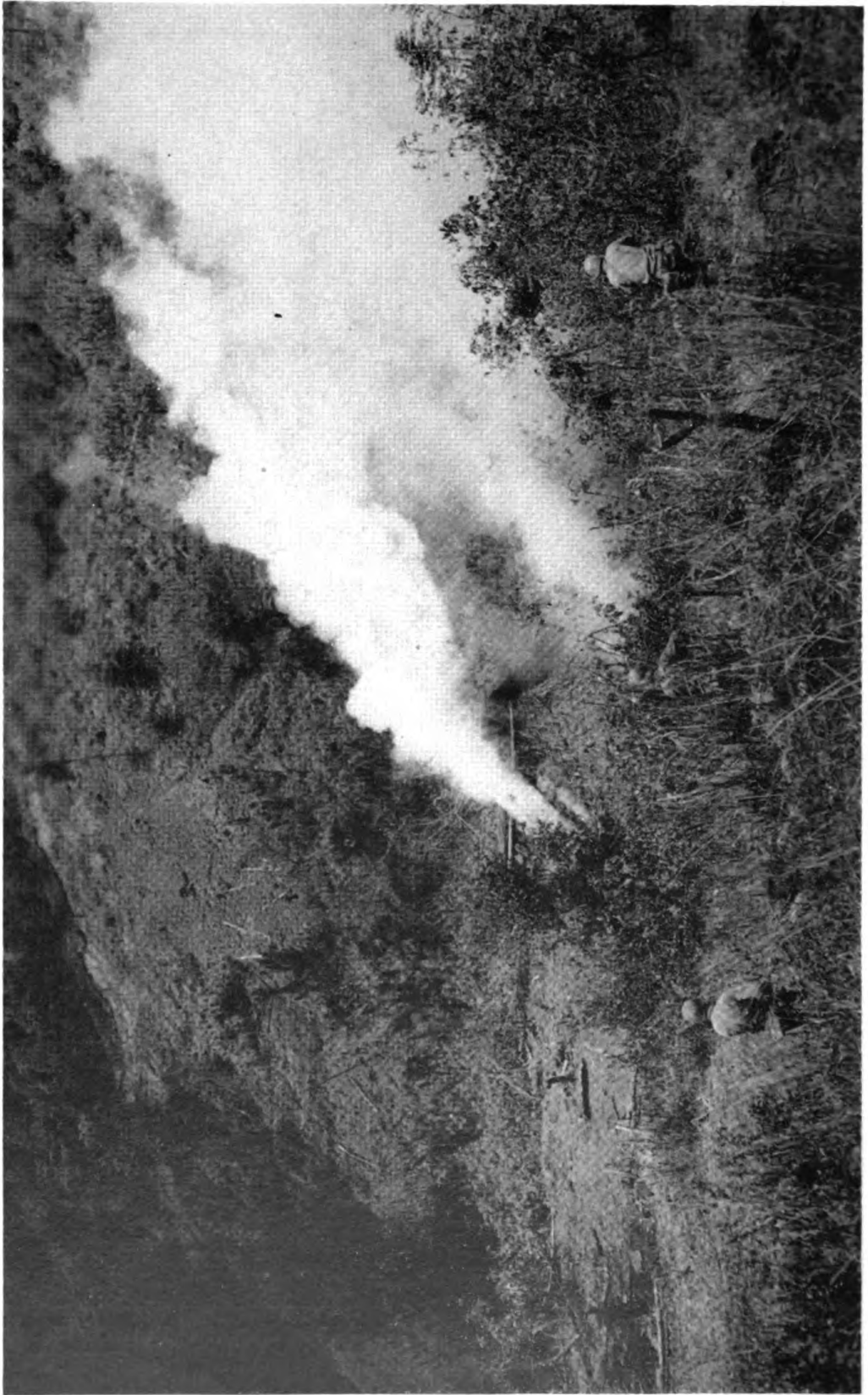
As soon as the grenade exploded, Rollins jumped into the emplacement. Two dead Japs lay in the bottom of the position. He moved through the tunnel to the gun on the left, crawling to within three feet of it before the crew detected him. Rollins quickly hip-fired twice, getting the two Japs on the gun. With that, he backed off a few paces and arched a grenade into the nest. Three more Japanese fell. Rollins then crawled back into the emplacement, peeled two of the dead enemy from the gun, grabbed the piece by its hot barrel and slung it onto the ridge for his comrades to see. He was later decorated with the DSC.

Company G had little difficulty in smothering the other gun, out-flanking it from the enemy's now unprotected side. This position had been the heart of the enemy defense on the central part of the ridge. With both machine guns destroyed, the Nips were unable to halt the company's assault. Knee-mortar men and snipers continued to oppose Weatherwax's troops, but by 1100 most of these had been eliminated. George Company's drive had cut the ridge into two segments.

Cavender's force found sterner resistance to the south. Three tall knobs, laterally spanning the southern part of the ridge, blocked A Company's route of advance. Each was mutually supporting and occupied by machine guns. Attempts to envelop the left and right knobs had proven costly and unsuccessful. Lt. Joseph H. Schneider, a lanky New Yorker commanding the 1st Platoon, voluntarily organized a company assault team composed wholly of BAR men. He then led this makeshift group in an assault against the center knob. A shower of grenades followed by the simultaneous outburst of six BARs permitted the team to mount the slope without casualty. Once on top of the knob Schneider walked to the point of the attack and staged a one-man display of courage that was mainly responsible for clearing the hill.

He moved from one spiderhole to another riddling Nips with point-blank bursts of BAR fire. When his ammunition was finally expended he rejoined the company, gathered up an armful of grenades and resumed his former tactics. His troops followed directly behind him, wiping out survivors. Other elements of Company A then climbed the center knob and launched attacks from this point which resulted in the seizure of the two remaining obstacles. Schneider too won a DSC.





*A combat patrol assaults a Japanese outpost at the foot of Skyline Ridge*

By the time the three disputed points were secured and fortified, it was too late in the day for the company to undertake further offensive action. Instead, Captain Cavender consolidated his gains and established a perimeter around the three knobs. He intended to resume the attack at dawn. Battalion headquarters sent a carrying party up to Company A shortly before nightfall with ammunition and water. Led by the unit's mess sergeant, S/Sgt. James Evans, the Filipino supply train walked into a barrage of 90mm mortar fire when it was fifty yards from Able's position. Several carriers were killed and Pfc. Melvin Jones, a cook, was seriously wounded. A few Filipinos dropped their burdens and began to run back into the valley. For a moment it seemed as though the panic would spread, but Evans calmed the remaining carriers and kept the supply train under control. The company got its supplies.

Able attacked on schedule. At dawn the infantrymen moved out with two platoons abreast and the third held back in support. Desperate resistance became apparent at once. Artillery and 4.2 mortars brought fires down in front of the company but every position had to be taken with rifle and grenade. By 1200, however, Company A managed to fight to within one hundred yards of the Company F position. Here, Sgt. Roger E. Brown, in command of the 60mm mortar section, set up his pieces in battery and gave the objective a twenty-minute shelling. The 2d and 3d Platoons, led by Lts. Kenneth Lanman and Harold Witherspoon, rushed the position as soon as supporting fires ceased. After a sharp hour-long hand-to-hand fight the company seized the commanding ground on three sides of the objective.

Baker Company, kept out of action since its 1 May fight at Tebbo, was sent forward as soon as Cavender radioed battalion of his success. Together with the 1st Battalion Assault Group, Kissel's riflemen engaged in general mopping up. By 1630 action on Skyline Ridge was confined to ferreting out stragglers and sealing caves. Counted Japanese dead on the Able Company objective totalled sixty-nine. Seven light machine guns, one heavy, five mortars and a 47mm antitank gun had been captured. The two-day operation by A and G accounted for close to two hundred enemy soldiers.

But the seizure of Skyline Ridge did not end operations in this sector. One additional terrain feature prevented regimental domination of the Agno River Valley, Skyline Ridge and Tebbo. Unnamed by the 136th, this ground was in the form of a high ridge running perpendicular to Skyline Ridge. Its western tip almost formed a right angle with the northern edge of Skyline Ridge. This terrain served as

a key point in the enemy defense line. Several weeks before, when the Japs shuttled between the Tebbo area and Baguio, they travelled via this commanding ground. Only a shallow saddle separated it from current regimental positions. High point on the enemy-held terrain was Mount Ugu, a 5,000-foot-high peak located on the eastern half of the ridge. All through the Skyline Ridge battle it had been valuable as an enemy OP.

Just before sundown on 4 May Companies A and B were relieved by Easy and Fox. At 0900 the following day the 1st Battalion, less Company C, was withdrawn and sent to Tebbo as I Corps reserve. The 2d Battalion, with Charley Company attached, now composed the infantry force in the Tebbo zone. Lt. Colonel Haycock deemed a redistribution of troops advisable in light of the manpower shortage. Weatherwax's unit and Company F, under Lt. Raymond A. Harms, were kept on Skyline Ridge. Easy Company and the battalion antitank platoon built a perimeter across the valley from Skyline on the first ridge held by the regiment. They were designated as the support force. Company C remained on the high ground west of the Gap charged with maintaining battalion flank security.

With Skyline Ridge safely in regimental hands, Colonel Cavenee was free to plan the final attack. Heartening news had reached him on 3 May just before A and G Companies undertook the assault on the ridge. General Clarkson had ordered the 3d Battalion, 130th Infantry, from Baguio to effect a junction with the 136th Infantry at The Gap. This battalion was to be attached to the regiment upon its arrival.

Like everyone else, Lt. Colonel Minton's Blackhawk battalion ran into the Tebbo stumbling block. Arriving at Hand Grenade Hill at 1700 on 4 May the force tried to move on through the Agno River Valley but the lead company was halted by machine-gun fire. Due to the lateness of the hour, the battalion commander was forced to draw back his forward elements, go into a perimeter, and plan for an early-morning reconnaissance. At dawn a single rifle platoon went out to probe the position, hoping to obtain information which might prove helpful in planning the drive. This group employed different tactics than its predecessors. The men climbed to the top of the ridges overlooking the valley and made all forward movements over this high ground. When they came abreast of Tebbo, they dropped off the ridge and into the strongpoint.

No Nips or sputtering machine guns were there to greet them. Several dead enemy—probably killed by Baker Company four days

before—and three idle machine guns were the only signs that Hand Grenade Hill had ever served as an enemy bastion. A natural supposition was that the Japanese formerly manning this point had been withdrawn during the night to reinforce the Mount Ugu ridge. Additional reconnaissance turned up a round concrete-and-steel pillbox located on the edge of a draw near the oval-shaped hill. This single installation commanded the entire valley floor. Guns firing from it obviously were the same ones which had contained the advance of 136th Infantry elements. Lt. Colonel Minton moved the battalion through the valley when he was notified that the enemy had abandoned Tebbo. He arrived at The Gap at 1100 on 5 May.

Sudden changes in the weather made it imperative that the regiment follow an immediate course of action. Daily tropical rains were swelling the waters of the Ambayabang to near-flood levels. Supply trains were experiencing increasing difficulty in fording the winding stream. Carriers employed by the Division, who were natives of the Tebbo district, told the regimental commander that the fast-rising river would spill over its banks within two weeks. This prediction prompted Colonel Cavenee to hasten preparations for an attack on the Mount Ugu ridge.

Everything at the regiment's disposal would have to be committed in one huge assault. It had to be all or nothing: once the fords across the Ambayabang became impassable the 136th Infantry would be forced to leave the sector. With this in mind the Bearcat CO named just the hill mass forming the western end of the ridge as the regiment's final objective. Knowing the enemy's capabilities, Colonel Cavenee decided to make the attack at three-battalion strength. Consequently, the 3d Battalion, 136th Infantry, resting in Baguio, was alerted for a move to The Gap to join the 2d Battalion and the 3d Battalion, 130th Infantry. Major Ralph Pate—acting as battalion commander in the absence of hospitalized Lt. Colonel Hulbert—loaded his men on trucks on the morning of 9 May. After a 120-mile trip that took it down to Bauang, thence south to Binalonan, across the plains to San Manuel and finally up to The Gap, the battalion reported in at 1600.

With all ground commanders present, the colonel was able to issue his attack order. On 12 May the 2d and 3d Battalions, 136th Infantry, were to move forward in the main effort. The 2d Battalion, less Company F, was to jump off from Skyline Ridge and secure the southern half of the objective. Major Pate's troops were given the mission of cracking the northern half. They were to go into the attack from positions on a small ridge due west of the target area. Companies C and F

received orders to advance on the enemy's rear and create a diversion. It was hoped that the Japanese would interpret the C-F move as an all-out effort and shift a considerable part of their defense to meet it. The 3d Battalion, 130th Infantry, was named as reserve.

Troops of the assault forces spent 10 May deploying into favorable positions. Artillery FOs used the time to register in concentrations. Guns at The Gap combed the forward slope and top of the steep ridge while medium artillery at Dalupirip raked the reverse slope. A patrol from Company G was sent toward the ridge on reconnaissance when registration was completed. Oddly, the unit was able to penetrate to within fifty yards of the 2d Battalion objective without drawing fire. It seemed evident that the Nips chose to mask their resources and play a waiting game. Lt. Colonel Haycock, readily recognizing the wisdom of these tactics, followed suit. At his nightly company commanders' conference he decreed that no offensive activity was to take place the following day: no patrols, no artillery fire, movement of individuals to be restricted to a minimum. It would all add up to additional surprise on the morning of 12 May.

Major Pate was forced to adopt a different scheme. With his troops newcomers to the territory, he had to get as much information about the enemy as possible in a one-day period. Company K sent two platoons toward the ridge to jab at the enemy flank. Japs there were quick to take up the fight. Machine-gun and mortar fire denied Company K an intimate knowledge of the ground. Actually, so intense a fire fight developed that a platoon from Love Company was forced to help Company K break contact and withdraw to 3d Battalion positions.

Meanwhile, what of Companies C and F, the diversionary force? In order to reach the Japanese right flank, they were forced to cross Skyline Ridge near its southern tip and then advance northward for some 2,500 yards. Their area of operations was far removed from any other in the regimental zone of action. Captain Fox began to advance toward his forward assembly area on 10 May. Leaving the west side of The Gap at 1200, he established contact with Lieutenant Harms and Company F on Skyline Ridge at dusk.

As it was too late for further movement, the companies were satisfied to move down the reverse slope of the ridge and go into bivouac. At dawn of the 11th, they resumed their march. All day long the forces slogged northward along the base of the ridge, moving farther away from friendly troops with every step. The extreme heat slowed the advance and prostrated many of the men. Those who escaped the ravages of the blistering sun were reduced to a state of fatigue by the

rugged terrain. Bands of enemy stragglers repeatedly harassed the column and pitched battles often occurred before they could be wiped out. Finally, at 1700, the two companies stumbled onto their assigned position, just below the Japanese flank. Captain Fox and Lieutenant Harms agreed to construct a single perimeter at the base of a long, sweeping spur which rose to their common objective.

Nip raiders armed with two knee mortars selected this time to commence harassing activities. From positions close to Mount Ugu they were able to observe the last thousand yards of C and F's advance. When the enemy saw the two companies halt, shed equipment and prepare to dig in, they moved down one of the draws flanking the spur and poured fire into the unprotected troops. Quickly the men dispersed along the grassy hillside. T/Sgt. Peter Zaleskas mounted his three 60mm mortars on the open ground and adjusted counterbattery fire by sound ranging. Luck was with him, and his guns silenced both Nip mortars after a five-minute duel. With this threat removed, the doughs were now free to dig in. Foxholes were excavated just a little bit deeper, machine gunners selected fields of fire with the utmost care and the mortars were meticulously emplaced so as to cover every avenue of approach to the position. Everyone expected an active evening.

Shortly after sundown the enemy hit all sides of the two-company perimeter. Knee mortars stayed back this time and blasted the position while Nip riflemen crawled forward and grenaded the outside line of emplacements. C and F, thousands of yards from any help, dared not pull back. A spirit of desperation guided their defense and the enemy failed to break through the circular pattern of fire formed by a section of 60mm mortars and four light machine guns. After two hours of relentless pressure the Japanese evidently realized that a continuation of their present tactics would cost them more men they could afford to lose. They gathered their dead, pulled back to higher ground and spent the rest of the night harassing the perimeter with machine-gun fire.

While this course of action did not increase American casualties, it did provide the Japanese with a distinct advantage. Periodic fire kept Companies C and F in a constant state of tension. Rest, desperately needed, was denied them. There would be no period of recuperation to shake off the weariness accumulated during the approach march. Also, their dawn attack would be carried out without the benefits of preliminary artillery fires. By engaging Companies C and F as soon as they arrived in the area, the Japs prevented attached FOs from laying down either protective fires or preliminary concentrations on the ob-





Howitzers at The Gap poured steady fires onto Skyline Ridge

jective. When they were finally dispersed, it was too late for observer parties to begin registration.

At dawn of 12 May all units went into the attack. Easy and George Companies drove against the right side of the Japanese line while the 3d Battalion sliced in on the left. As no artillery or mortar barrage had announced the 2d Battalion move, the Nips were taken by surprise. Companies E and G had already fought through the difficult network of emplacements before the enemy could muster any coordinated resistance. By that time Weatherwax and Sherrard held the upper hand. The two companies smothered Nip counteractivity before it was well organized. Beaten Japanese suddenly broke and scattered. Many were shot down as they attempted to fall back to a supplementary position, but others made the safety of the nearby gullies. Battalion was notified at 1030 that its objective was occupied.

Companies C and F were creating the anticipated diversion during this phase of the battle. During the march up the spur to their objective, Charley's scouts could observe several squad-sized groups of Nips clustered around the crest of the ridge. When they saw the company commit itself to a route of advance, the enemy suddenly scattered to numerous emplacements on the ridge top and along its sides. Company C, still advancing, came to a deep cut which crossed the spur about two hundred yards short of the objective. It was decided here that Fox Company would stay in support on one side of the cut, while Company C went down into the deep draw and then up to Skyline Ridge.

As the company moved out of the cut, it deployed into an assault formation with the 2d and 3d Platoons abreast followed by the Weapons Platoon and then by the support platoon. Slowly the skirmish line walked up to the crest of the ridge. Not a shot was fired. Scouts moved to within five yards of the objective and still hit no resistance. One more step and then the enemy acted. Just as the first men were about to set foot on top of the objective, six cross-firing machine guns suddenly spat out their fires in a single tremendous burst. Mortars, a 20mm dual-purpose gun, and a barrage of grenades added to the uproar. Company C was crucified in its tracks.

The first fusillade enfiladed the assault platoons. Nine doughs fell dead and a like number were wounded. Frontal fire raked through the remnants and caught the Weapons Platoon and Company F, far back on the spur. Mortars and machine guns were knocked out as they lay cradled in the arms of gunners and assistant gunners. Harms' unit had four men killed and nine wounded before the troops even had time to hit the ground.

There was no fire support, little leadership. Artillery hadn't received an opportunity for pre-attack registrations on the objective; now the FO tried to range in, but he was unable to locate any of the smoke shells fired by his battery. Back at the cut, the fifteen men in the 1st Platoon could not be committed without some sort of support. If they advanced up the spur toward the casualties, they too would be decimated by the vicious cross-fire. Wounded riflemen went unattended. Pfc. Lawrence Rich, sole aid man with the leading elements, was killed by a grenade as he tried to drag one of the casualties to safety.

Staff Sergeant Gerald Obenauf and Lt. Melvin E. Lindgren, assault platoon leaders, were killed by machine-gun fire. Their seconds-in-command, Sgt. Lester Hansen and T/Sgt. Edward J. Szurgot, each suffered serious wounds. Only Captain Fox and Lieutenant Winston, his executive, were left to carry out command functions. P-38s circling overhead suddenly added to the confusion. One of them—mistaking the company for enemy—dropped two 500-pound bombs on the battered troops. Fortunately, the half-ton of HE landed in a gully about sixty-five yards from the company and the walls of the small ravine absorbed all of the shrapnel and most of the concussion.

Captain Fox, with the company CP near the cut, ordered Lieutenant Winston, up front, to make a withdrawal. Taking several members of the 1st Platoon, he scaled the cut and went back to Company F. Once there he tried to work Lieutenant Harms' men into positions from which they could support the move off the spur. However, as soon as the doughs raised themselves from the ground and attempted to assume supporting positions, they drew fresh outbursts of fire from the enemy. In a few seconds the volume of this fire grew so heavy that Company F was forced to back down the spur. Fox and the C Company riflemen tried to rejoin their force, but by this time the lip of the cut was completely covered by Japanese machine gunners.

Lieutenant Winston and fifteen men were left on the bare slope together with the casualties who had been unable to crawl to safety. Their mission was already accomplished; Companies C and F were never expected to actually seize ground. Only one thing remained to be done: rescue the wounded from beneath the muzzles of Nip machine guns and break contact with the enemy.

Luckily, most of the men were armed with automatic weapons. Three or four carried BARs and a similar number had submachine guns. A base of fire was set up on the ridge side. Targets were still ill-defined, so volume of fire necessarily had to substitute for accuracy.



All pieces opened up on the group leader's command. Nips in defensive positions, diagnosing the situation, responded with fire, but they could not immediately gain the superiority that had been theirs throughout the action.

As the fire fight raged, a small team of doughs backed out of the line, cut around to the side and then crawled out toward the casualties. The two- or three-man rescue team had to brave Jap guns going out and coming back. Progress was painful, but a man was dragged back on every trip. As soon as a casualty was collected, he was hauled back to the defilade afforded by the cut in the spur. Some of the walking wounded there then took the casualties and carried them to safety through a gully which led down from the cut.

This procedure went on until almost 1300 when the last of the litter cases reached the cut. Many of the rescue group themselves sustained wounds bringing in the casualties but all kept on with their task. Pfc. Howard K. Robbins was hit in the hand and stomach by machine-gun fire. Sergeant Hansen suffered a bullet wound in the side when his platoon was first ambushed, but refused to withdraw until every casualty had been evacuated. Even though he could barely walk, Sergeant Hansen personally saved the lives of at least three men.

Breaking contact with the enemy posed a problem. To simply cease fire and run for the cut invited slaughter. Moving almost imperceptibly, the men on the firing line began to inch their way to the rear. Then, one at a time, they pulled out and dashed for the cut under covering fire provided by those remaining on the line. Again a few were wounded, but these were able to proceed without assistance. Everyone got out.

Captain Fox meanwhile had radioed back for medical assistance. A Cub plane took off from Sapinet with plasma, morphine, dressings, and litters. The pilot arrived over the position just as the last casualties were coming out of the escape route. Filipino carriers had been dispatched from the 2d Battalion CP to serve as litter bearers. They reached Company C at 1330.

The diversionary force took fifty-three casualties. Company C had twelve dead and twenty-three wounded, approximately fifty-five per cent of the company's front-line strength. Harms' troops suffered four dead and a dozen wounded. Of the three-man artillery FO party, two were seriously hit. As soon as Captain Fox reported that evacuation was taking place, he was ordered to lead the two companies back to the 2d Battalion CP. Once there, Company C was sent back to San Manuel while Fox Company stayed on Skyline Ridge as battalion security.



*Enemy ammunition dumps were dug into the reverse slope of Skyline Ridge, where they were immune to artillery fire*

Activity was intense on the 3d Battalion front during these developments. At 1400 on 12 May I and L were still locked in a fight along the left flank, unable to penetrate the Japanese line. Captain Nussbaum's Company K was committed from reserve at this time while Company E moved across the ridge top and hit the Nips from a second direction. Under pressure from four rifle companies, the enemy defense wilted. Major Pate reported all objectives taken at dusk.

Japanese infantrymen made their final offensive thrust that night. Fifty of them—believed to be the force that intercepted C and F Companies—moved down the ridge after dark and attacked Company G's position, the closest American installation. Fighting raged for three hours, but Weatherwax's men scattered the raiders with heavy casualties.

All elements of the regiment began extensive mopping-up operations at dawn. Assault groups took over the leading role in this phase of the fight. They travelled from one cave to another, first searing its interior with flame and then sealing the entrance with TNT charges. Riflemen covering avenues of departure liquidated scores

of stragglers trying to flee northward. The ridge was cleared of enemy troops at noon, 13 May.

After three solid months of action and thirty-four days in this area, Colonel Cavenee's regiment was now free to enjoy a well earned rest in Baguio. All troops abandoned the sector on the afternoon of the 14th. Lt. Colonel Minton's 3d Battalion, 130th Infantry, moved back to the summer capital on foot, taking the same route through Tebbo which it had used when marching down from Baguio. Corps' 694th Field Artillery Battalion—a worthy partner of the 136th Infantry—uprooted its howitzers and rode back to I Corps headquarters at Rosales. Regimental elements mounted trucks at The Gap and took the circuitous route to the mountain city through San Manuel, Binalonan and Bauang.

Individual acts of gallantry were commonplace during the fight for the two ridges. Of the thirty-nine awards of the Distinguished Service Cross won by members of the Golden Cross in World War II, thirteen are for Skyline Ridge actions. Only three of these are posthumous awards: one to Captain Suess and the others to Lieutenant Lindgren and Pfc. Bernard F. Grimmeke of Company C. Lieutenant Lindgren's came for silencing a machine gun during the abortive diversion on 12 May, while Grimmeke received the decoration for killing nine Japs as lead scout of a small reconnaissance patrol. This action occurred on 19 April. He was killed by a sniper's bullet three days later while on another mission.

Members of the 1st Battalion earned seven of the thirteen DSCs. Company C doughs received five and the remaining two went to Company A. Lieutenant Winston, Private First Class Robbins, and Pfc. Howard E. Cooper joined Lieutenant Lindgren and Private First Class Grimmeke as recipients of the Nation's second highest award. With the exception of Grimmeke's, all actions leading to the awards occurred on 12 May during the ill-fated diversion. Cooper collaborated with Lieutenant Lindgren in wiping out a Jap Nambu—being wounded three times in the process—while Lieutenant Winston and Private First Class Robbins were credited with rescuing many of the litter cases from the edge of the Japanese strongpoint.

In Company A, Pfc. Ralph Snell and Lieutenant Schneider earned the DSC. Snell had much to do with the success of Able's climax drive along Skyline Ridge on 4 May. During the assault on Fox Company's old position, his platoon was stopped by frontal machine-gun fire. Snell wiped out two guns to allow his platoon to advance. He accounted for



one with point-blank BAR fire and the other by bringing 60mm mortar fire upon it even though he had never before adjusted mortars. The thick-set Illinoisan got the second weapon after he had been painfully wounded by a rifle bullet.

Technical Sergeant Harry G. Kepford, S/Sgt. Urban J. Dykstra and Private First Class Rollins comprised Company G's representatives among the 136th Infantry DSC recipients. Kepford—awarded the Silver Star on the Kennon Road—further distinguished himself on 12 May during the 2d Battalion attack on the Mount Ugu ridge. When his platoon was temporarily halted by fire from a well emplaced enemy strongpoint, Kepford walked out ahead of his scouts and personally killed ten Japanese. He also destroyed one machine gun. With this barrier removed, his company was able to advance and quickly seize its objective.

Dykstra, a machine-gun section leader, was cited for heroism on 11 April during George Company's drive to reach marooned Company F. When Dykstra saw one of his gunners hit by mortar fragments during the height of the attack, he raced across a strip of heavily shelled terrain toward the idle piece. The sergeant was wounded twice en route, once in the arm and again in the leg. Despite his serious wounds, Dykstra restored the weapon to operation, pouring fire against the enemy until he collapsed from loss of blood.

Two awards of the Distinguished Service Cross went to Easy Company men. Sgt. Herbert Clayton, company communications sergeant, earned his while on a combat patrol on 10 May. In the course of the patrol, Clayton's group was ambushed by a Nip machine gun firing at close range. Clayton rushed past the riflemen and charged the fast-firing gun, killing its crew with a single grenade. He then manned the weapon, using it to mow down a squad of Japanese preparing to attack his patrol's exposed flank.

A rifle squad leader, Sgt. Julius B. Olson, received the Distinguished Service Cross for wiping out an enemy installation during Company E's 12 May attack. His action came at a critical time. Easy troops, forming the point of the advance, were stopped cold by a seven-man strongpoint built on a knob in front of the battalion objective. After several men had been hit attempting to neutralize this enemy group, Olson moved up on the small hill and killed all seven of the enemy with rifle fire and grenades.

## Chapter 15: Dingalan Bay Task Forces

LACK of front-line manpower became an acute problem for I Corps once the bloody sweep from Lingayen Gulf to the Philippine Sea had split the enemy's Luzon force into southern and northern pockets. When it appeared that the horizontal severance was imminent, General Yamashita withdrew the major part of his command into the Caraballo Mountains and dug in along a front which stretched from one coast of the island to the other. His strategy and its effect on Corps personnel problems did not take long to crystallize.

By confining its activities to the hill country, the Japanese High Command accomplished several favorable ends. First of all, cognizant that I Corps must follow the fight in its role of attacker, the Nip selected a battleground which emphasized his numerical superiority. Too, Yamashita forced General Swift to conform to the Japanese pattern of action: man-against-man campaigning where Corps would have to commit large numbers of troops to secure relatively lightly manned positions. Another factor in the enemy's favor was his ability to minimize the effects of American armor, heavy artillery and mobile reconnaissance units whose operations were restricted by the nature of the terrain.

Corps did not have sufficient infantry to engage the enemy at all points of his line. Instead, ground commanders concentrated on breaking through the most heavily defended sectors in the Nip defense: the Galiano-Pugo-Kennon Road area, the Villa Verde Trail and Balete Pass. By mid-April, the operational successes of the three divisions active in these zones had forced Yamashita to renege on his boasts of invincibility. Baguio was all but taken; the Cagayan Valley was seriously threatened.

Enemy tacticians had no choice but to dissolve portions of their original line and recommit the troops in key sectors. While these now inactive areas posed no threat to the success of the Northern Luzon operation, it still became necessary to maintain surveillance in order to prevent reorganization and establishment of escape routes for defeated remnants. General Swift found the men to accomplish these patrolling and roadblock missions by the simple means of requisitioning reserves from his active divisions. Orders from Corps G-3 attached all idle division reserves and quickly redesignated them as I Corps reserve. Reserve commanders reported to General Swift's CP at Rosales for orders and then were immediately dispatched to the hinterlands. The task force sent to Dingalan Bay—manned and commanded by a 33d Division nucleus—was conceived when Corps named the 1st Battalion, 123d Infantry, as its reserve.

Just prior to this attachment, the battalion had experienced several days of rough fighting during its seven vain attempts to breach the Bilbil-Lomboy vise at Galiano and race through to Asin. General Clarkson, recognizing the urgency of this mission and the poor condition of his assault force, replaced this unit with the 1st Battalion, 130th Infantry, on 9 April. Lt. Colonel Coates, the 123d battalion commander, was directed to take his weary troops back to Sison for service as Division reserve. It was intended that they rest. However, as soon as Division notified Corps of the relief, a message reached G-3 instructing the Division to turn its reserve over to I Corps. Concurrently, word came to Division requesting that one rifle company of the new Corps reserve and the battalion executive officer report to Rosales immediately.

Company A, commanded by Capt. Harry Ice, was selected to accompany Major Robert V. Connolly to the Corps CP on the morning of the 10th. As soon as Connolly and Ice reached Rosales, Able Company was deployed around the Corps installation as CP security while Connolly was ushered into the office of the G-3. He was told at once that he was to head a vital, high-priority Corps mission.

A complete briefing then took place. In recent weeks Corps had received reports from Rangers and guerrillas operating in the Dingalan Bay sector—Corps' eastern flank—giving complete details of Japanese infiltration back into the bay area. An escape route had been established close by and bands of stragglers who had been crushed by XIV Corps in Southern Luzon were moving northward with the hope of eventually linking up with the Japanese Northern Luzon force. At Dingalan Bay they were reorganized and many were dispatched toward the Cagayan Valley, while others took over the task of harassing the guerrillas and keeping the route open. Corps operated two large sawmills near Dingalan Bay, one on the shore and the other at Bitoluk, several miles inland, and it was feared that the enemy might launch an attack on these valuable installations.

Major Connolly was informed that he was responsible for cracking the escape route, protecting the sawmills, and killing off the organized groups of Nips at Dingalan Bay. Elements of his own battalion were scheduled to accompany him and serve as the nucleus of his unit. The conglomeration of American troops and guerrillas was to be known as Connolly Task Force.

Corps granted Connolly *carte blanche* in the selection of 123d Infantry elements to accompany him on his assignment. For his rifle company he chose Ice's outfit. Good friends, both officers had much

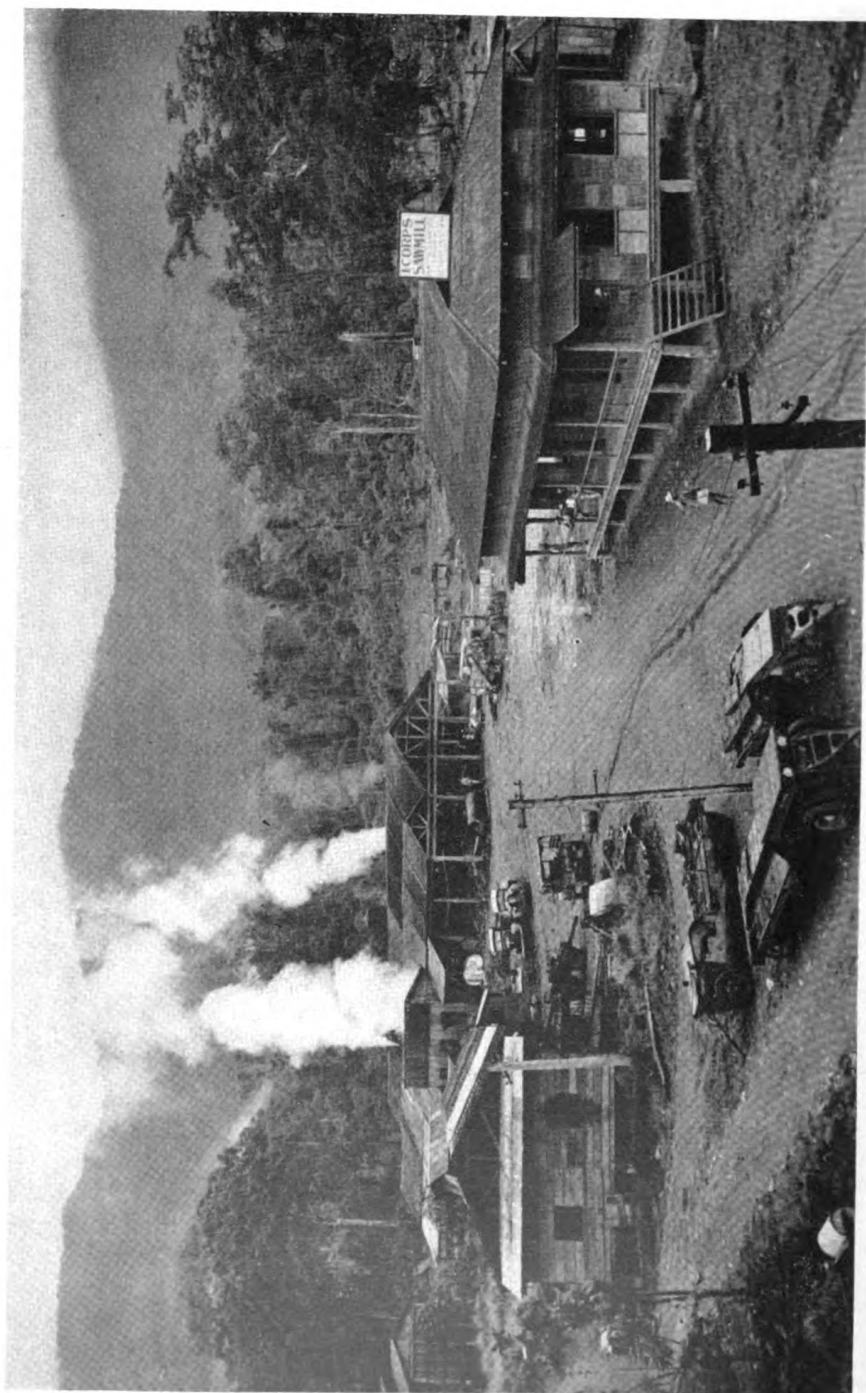
in common. Each was deliberate, unexcitable and aggressive; carry-overs from pre-war days when both had received national recognition as college football stars. Connolly, a giant of a man standing well over six feet and weighing about 225 pounds, played tackle and end for New York University from 1937 to 1939. Ice, on the other hand a comparatively puny specimen, made most of the 1941 All-Americans as a University of Missouri halfback. He was a veteran of Sugar Bowl and College All-Star play. Captain Ice was designated task force executive officer. Command of Able Company passed to Lieutenant Roop.

Practically the entire 1st Battalion staff was transferred to Connolly. Intelligence and operations were combined under Lieutenant John F. Reardon, normally battalion S-2. The assistant battalion surgeon, Lt. Howard W. Foley, joined the force as its surgeon. For supply officer Major Connolly requested Lt. Daniel J. Ferrone, the regular S-4. S/Sgt. Robert V. Easton, battalion operations sergeant, was assigned as Lieutenant Reardon's assistant. Supporting weapons came from Company D, which furnished a section each of heavy machine guns and 81mm mortars. By the time clerks, aid men and drivers were picked up, the 1st Battalion's contribution to Connolly Task Force numbered 12 officers and 137 enlisted men.

Once component units were assembled and oriented at Rosales, Corps trucks carried them to Dingalan Bay. Connolly proceeded directly to the headquarters of the 1st Anderson Battalion—Filipino guerrillas—for an on-the-ground accounting of the situation. Located on the northern shore of the C-shaped bay, the guerrilla camp-site appeared to be a likely site for the force CP. Connolly quickly grouped all subordinate command posts in this area, erected his own CP and named the enlarged installation Task Force Headquarters. Meanwhile Company A, awaiting a tactical assignment, was impressed to guard the bay-front camp.

Active operations began on the morning of 13 April. After weighing the multitude of guerrilla and Alamo Scout team reports and recommendations, Connolly decided to post the cream of his force, Company A, at points in the bay area subject to the heaviest enemy traffic. A logical spot for a major strongpoint was the mouth of the winding Umiray River. From its source in the Sierra Madre hill range northeast of Manila, the stream rolled through more than seventy miles of mountain country before emptying into the southern arm of Dingalan Bay.

Some fifty miles southwest of where the Umiray begins, the war was very much in progress. XIV Corps troops were engaged in push-



*The 1 Corps sawmill at Bitoluk*

ing thousands of Nips across the mountains toward Luzon's eastern shore. These enemy hordes, one-time defenders of the Manila waterworks in the Marikina-Antipolo area and the Shimbu Line, constituted the last Japanese threat to the security of Manila. Once they were crushed, the closing of the Luzon campaign would be dependent upon I Corps' northward progress. When defeat and ultimate annihilation appeared inevitable, large numbers of the retreating Nips, mostly sick, hungry troops who had lost contact with their units, sought to flee toward the Cagayan Valley. The Umiray was there to guide them. Once they reached Dingalan Bay they had but to swing wide around its waters and then resume their trek.

Connolly counted on surprising these Nips at the halfway mark of their route to the valley. He took one rifle platoon from Ice's company, reinforced it with light and heavy machine guns, a light and heavy mortar section, a group of Anderson's guerrillas, and an Alamo Scout team and sent the force to the Umiray. The Scouts, with their SCR-284, moved up the Umiray to the junction formed by Mararaqui Creek and set up a listening post. Attached Filipinos covered a pair of fords in the river midway between Dingalan Bay and the Umiray-Mararaqui intersection. Able Company's single rifle platoon plus the crew-served weapons took up positions at the anticipated hot spot: a flat, open sand bar at the mouth of the river.

Moving the men from task force headquarters to the river mouth brought the problem of inadequate transportation to the fore. Connolly had one nineteen-foot motor launch available for use if he desired to ferry his troops across the bay to their positions. On the other hand, should an overland route be taken, it necessitated a fourteen-hour march through the steamy jungles fringing the bay front. For a time it looked as though the doughboys would be forced to hike until one astute character suggested a convoy of native canoes. These craft, called *bancas*, were attached to the launch by lines and towed across the bay with their American cargo. The Umiray garrison afloat looked like anything but a combat force.

Remaining elements of Company A, less a CP security detachment, set up a base camp in an unrelated zone. They were posted in the tiny *barrio* of Papaya, about fifty miles west of the Connolly headquarters. Umiray and Papaya units had much the same mission: prevent the enemy from breaking through to the north. Patrol and kill.

Success crowned patrolling operations from the start. And, as expected, the Umiray River turned out to be the center of activity for the Dingalan Bay forces. Any unit working out of the river mouth



base was assured an interesting time. Troops searching the river racked up appalling numbers of enemy KIAs. Soon the execution of Umiray stragglers boiled down into an exact but simple science. Men alerted for a patrol usually received a post-breakfast briefing on the combat schedule, picked up an extra K ration and then journeyed several hundred yards downstream in search of an ambush location. Company A riflemen could always count on meeting a dozen or so Nips while en route to the ambush scene. Once well into the bush country, the patrol leader proceeded to well travelled portions of the jungle trail or to a section of the river bank known to be a bivouac location for the fleeing Nips. There, he deployed his men so that all approaches and exits to and from the ambush were covered by a cordon of M-1s and BARs. The wait was never long. Traffic generally flowed at an even pace. A returning patrol which failed to report a bag of fifteen to thirty enemy was greeted with scorn by their fellows at the sand bar.

So it went for almost three weeks. By the end of April Major Connolly was able to report to General Swift that more than two hundred Japs had been killed at Dingalan Bay without a single American casualty.

Humorous incidents occasionally took place which prevented a few patrols from falling into the category of "routine." One squad of Able Company, led by newly commissioned Lt. Edwin F. Voss, once came across a pair of Nips who had visions of ambush themselves. However, Voss's lead scout spotted the two, crouched over a Nambu light machine gun alongside the trail, and brought one down with his first round. Suddenly discouraged, his comrade tucked the Nambu under his arm and raced for the river. Lieutenant Voss's scout quickly took up the chase and pursued the Jap. The rest of the patrol came up in time to see the scout leaning against a tree carefully watching the enemy flounder across the shoulder-deep stream. Just as the Nip was about to enter the jungle on the opposite side, the scout calmly brought his M-1 to firing position and killed him with a bullet through the head. A sergeant, amazed at this seemingly exaggerated nonchalance, heatedly reamed out the hapless scout for almost permitting the Jap to escape. "Gosh, Sarge," muttered the rifleman with an injured air, "I just wanted to see if the poor bastard could swim."

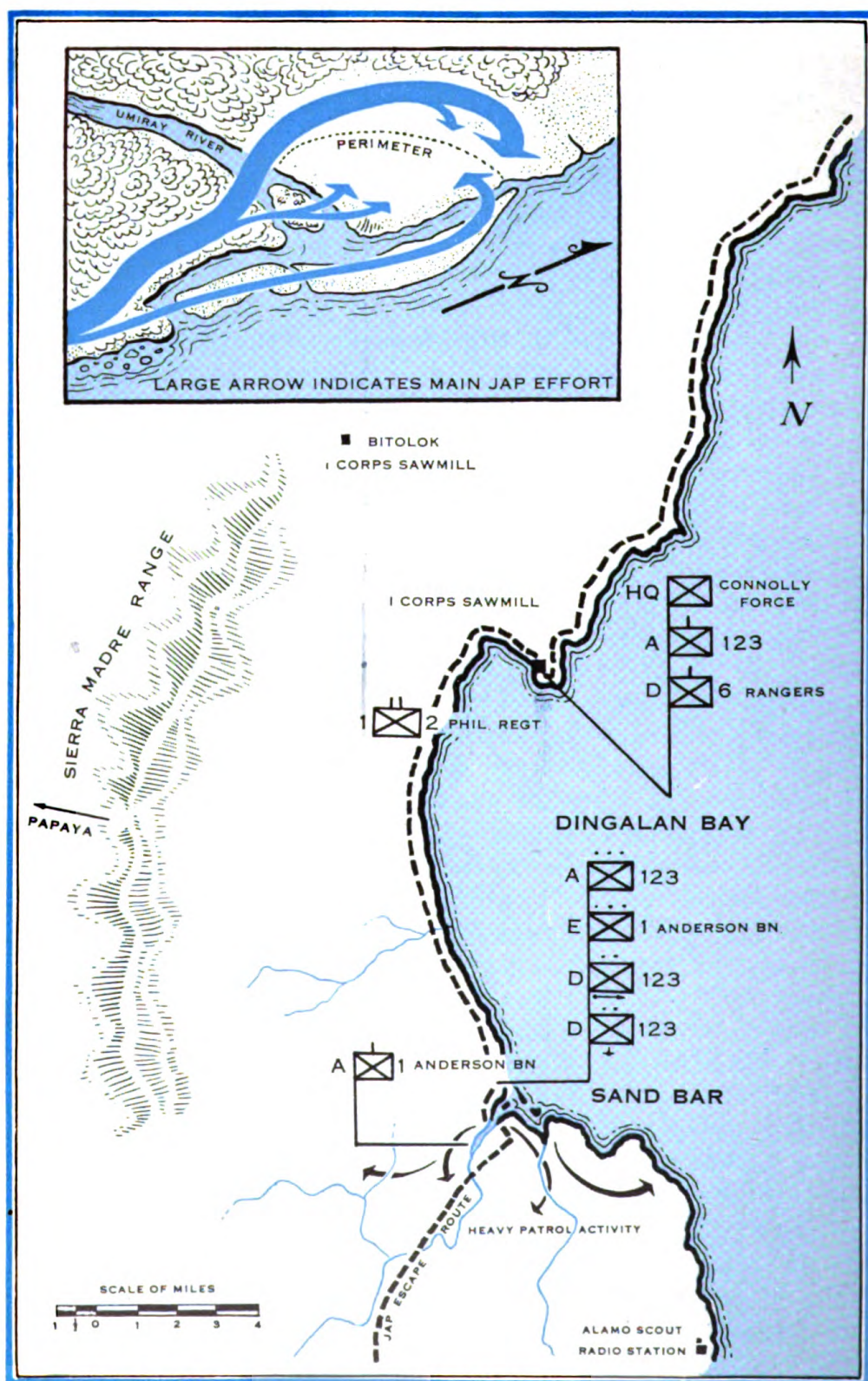
Another officer commissioned in the field, Lt. Harry Slain, also figured in an experience which had the Umiray as its locale. Slain took three guerrillas and a squad of infantrymen out on a mission along the river. He was charged with patrolling one side of the stream for several hundred yards, crossing at a ford, and then striking back along

the opposite bank. Lieutenant Slain's first scout had just clambered down the southern bank prior to crossing when a Nip did the same on the northern side. Both American and Jap were too surprised by each other's presence to do anything but stare. Collecting his wits, the Able Company dough decided to capture the enemy if possible. He called to the Nip to surrender. With a big smile on his face the Jap answered back "surrender." Slain's man placed his rifle on the ground and the Nip followed suit with alacrity. Telling the second scout to drop his weapon and follow, the doughboy swam across the water to claim his prisoner. The second scout, unarmed, and a guerrilla carrying a carbine were right behind him.

As the three dripping riflemen emerged from the stream, the smiling Nip greeted them with the statement—spoken in perfect English—that they were his prisoners. In a second both Yanks were on top of the enemy, pounding him into submission with their fists. The Filipino sat down on a rock to watch the fight, carefully laying his carbine across his knees. A real Pier Six brawl was under way when the Jap suddenly made an unforgivable violation of Marquis of Queensberry rules. He reached for a hand grenade concealed in his clothing. The guerrilla, regarding this move as an abhorrent lack of sportsmanship, ended the bout with a shot from his carbine.

However, not all was laughter with Connolly Task Force. Tragedy, in the form of its first casualty, struck hard on 6 May. Lieutenant Reardon, anxious to investigate guerrilla reports that the enemy had found new assembly areas, scouted out the lower Umiray from the nose of an Air Force B-25. During the reconnaissance, the medium bomber came under sustained ground fire from a Japanese force. Enemy machine guns sent the plane plummeting to earth. All aboard perished in the crash.

Reardon's death was a cruel blow to Major Connolly. During the three weeks of the task force's life he had come to regard the youthful Washingtonian as an indispensable assistant. Lieutenant Reardon's intelligence-operations decisions were infallibly sound and mature; his personal gallantry on reconnaissance of the highest type. Only a few days before, in a periodic report to Corps, Major Connolly had cited Reardon as "the most valuable single member of the force." In his final report to Colonel Serff, once the force was disbanded, Connolly eulogized Lieutenant Reardon in this manner: "Reardon augmented material received from rifle units and guerrillas with numerous patrols of his own. Most of his day was spent on reconnaissance along the Umiray and most of the night in piecing together his discoveries. His



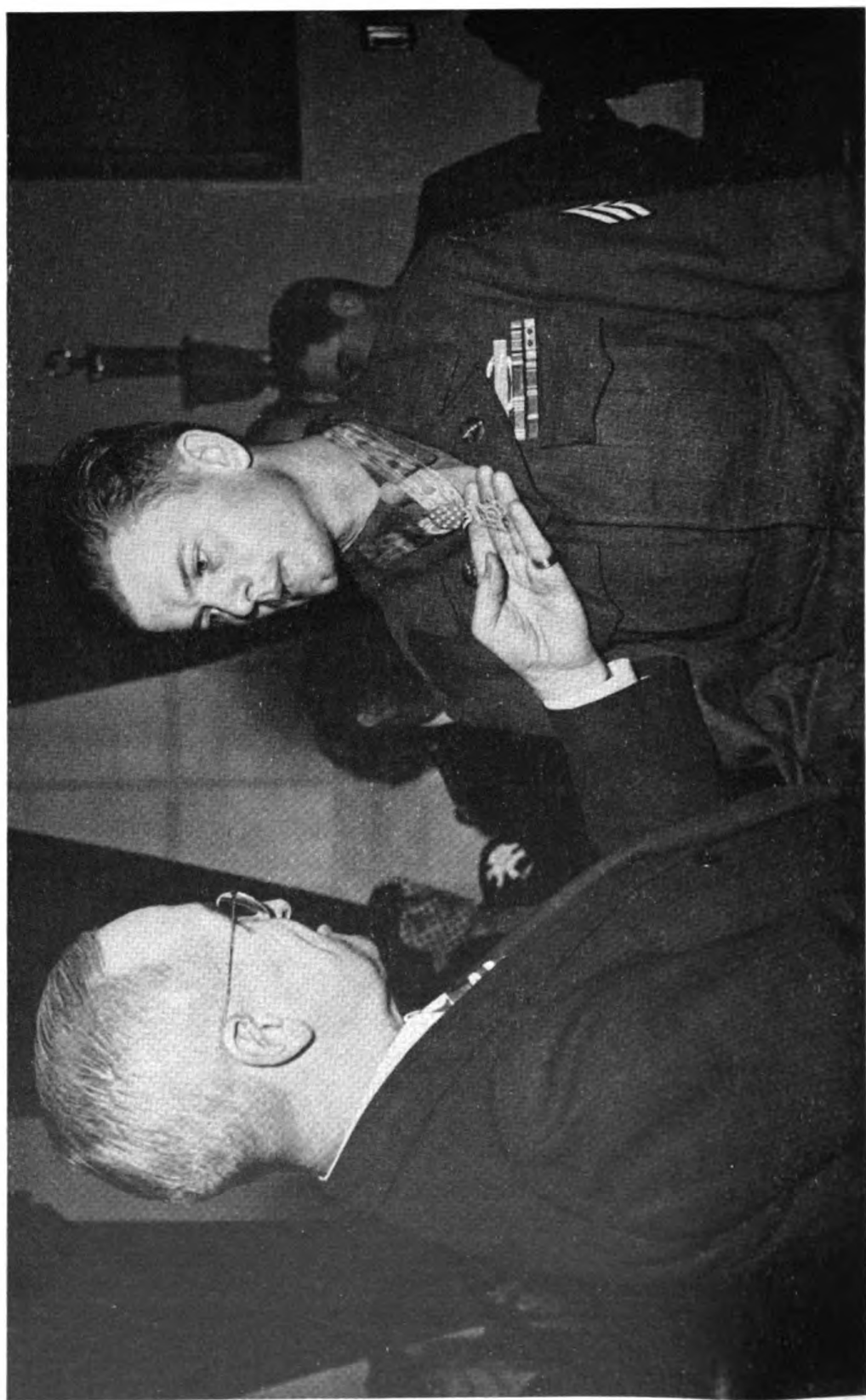
Map 25: Dingalan Bay defenses. Inset: The Umiray sand bar.

interpretation of facts secured, his estimates of enemy strength and his planning of patrols to counteract these capabilities contributed enormously to the success of the operation." Corps awarded Lieutenant Reardon the Silver Star posthumously.

Several days after the B-25 crash, an enemy prisoner, captured during a skirmish along the Umiray, broke down during interrogation and supplied information which was responsible for a general alert of all task force elements. Under the none-too-gentle persuasion of an infuriated guerrilla lieutenant, the Jap disclosed every detail of an enemy plan to overrun the Able Company outpost at the mouth of the river. Speaking in halting English, he explained that 150 stragglers had been rounded up, armed, and concealed in the hills, awaiting a chance to strike the sand bar. A date for the attack had finally been set. On 11 May, under the cover of early morning darkness, the Japanese force was slated to come out of hiding. At dawn the attack would begin. Oddly, the principal objective of the enemy troops was the large store of rations at the outpost. Ill and half-starved, the Nips' prime requisite was food if they were to continue their northward journey. An attack against the sand bar garrison was their sole solution.

This new development was reported to Corps at once. At Rosales, the G-3, fearful that Connolly lacked sufficient manpower and variety of weapons, decided to attach fresh troops to the Dingalan Bay force. Company D, 136th Infantry, just relieved from heavy fighting on Sky-line Ridge, was alerted for a move to the coast. Trucks carried them to Major Connolly's CP. By dawn of 10 May the Umiray outpost had been reinforced by a platoon of Dog Company machine guns and a section of 81mm mortars.

With the arrival of this new contingent of men, defense preparations began on a feverish scale. Major Connolly accompanied the D Company troops to the sand bar and took personal charge of erecting additional fortifications. New pillboxes, reinforced with logs and covered with sand, went up to house the added guns; individual fox-holes were drawn closer together in an effort to reduce the area of vulnerability between emplacements; communications trenches were constructed running from platoon CPs to rifle and weapons units. Heavy-weapons commanders coordinated on a fire support plan designed to best cover the installation. In turn, riflemen were disposed to provide protection for the machine guns. Each of the seven mortars, three lights and four heavies, was assigned a separate zone of responsibility so that 360-degree fires could be laid in the event that the attack came from all sides.



*President Truman presents the Medal of Honor to Sergeant John R. McKinney*



Day gave way to night at 2000 but there was no sleep for the Umiray garrison. An air of unmistakable tension hung over the perimeter like a black cloud. Foxhole companions softly speculated as to whether or not higherups had jumped off the deep end in their prediction of a counterattack. Guards crouched forward expectantly, eyes peering into the gloom, ears straining for any untoward sound. Watches were changed with unusual frequency; ground commanders wanted fresh men on guard throughout the night. Midnight passed, then the early morning hours. It began to appear as though the Japanese thrust was merely a figment of somebody's imagination. With dawn scarcely an hour away there was no sign of the night-time activity which generally preceded the enemy's morning moves.

Private First Class John R. McKinney, manning a light machine gun on the edge of the perimeter, momentarily abandoned his speculation for a glimpse of his watch. It was 0455. Gray filters of dawn were beginning to find their way through the blackness of night. Whispering to his assistant gunner to maintain the alert, McKinney crawled to a neighboring emplacement and wakened his relief. In a moment he reappeared at his gun. At 0500 another pair of A Company dough-boys crawled into the position and McKinney worked his way to a fox-hole ten yards from the machine gun which he shared with two guerrillas.

Finally relaxed after a long hour at the gun, McKinney—a Wood-cliff, Georgia, farmer in civilian life—made ready for a short nap before his next turn on guard. As he sat in his canvas-roofed emplacement he suddenly became aware of hands fumbling with his shelter. Before he could move, the canvas flap swung open and a saber-swinging Jap plunged into his hole. His first frenzied blow caught McKinney alongside the ear, dazing him and sending the blood flowing from a deep gash. Instinctively, the 24-year-old Georgian grabbed his rifle and bludgeoned his attacker with a single butt stroke. At the same moment another Nip charged in to the emplacement from the rear. McKinney struggled to his feet, whirled, and brought him down with a desperation hip-shot.

Now McKinney looked for the two guerrillas who had shared his shelter but in the melee both had left the hole and had run toward the interior of the position. Quickly his thoughts switched to the machine gun ten yards in front of him, the only American obstacle separating the Japanese from the heart of the perimeter. He saw the piece lying idle; one of the crewmen had been wounded and the gunner was trying to drag him to safety. Without pausing to round up assistance Mc-



Kinney raced toward the gun, reaching it a few paces before the shouting enemy. Unable to fire from such close range, he attempted to pull the machine gun to the rear but the enemy swarmed over him before he had taken three steps. He managed to get off one burst before he was borne backward by the Japanese horde.

From then on McKinney's actions were highly spectacular. The Georgian fought like a dervish, shooting, biting, kicking, gouging, and then swinging his rifle by its barrel when he had expended a clip. In between these operations he managed to push fresh clips into the receiver of his M-1 and work the machine gun farther to the rear. Again he dropped down and triggered the light .30, but by this time the piece was fouled by dirt kicked into it and McKinney was unable to make it function.

Instead he circled back to his foxhole and stuffed several clips of rifle ammunition inside his shirt. Again he moved forward to the machine gun to engage a second wave of enemy. Standing erect in the hole, with no cover from his knees up, the Georgian pumped rapid, effective fire into the Japanese ranks. Off to the right he could hear almost a hundred Nips hammering against other points in the Able Company line. Twice hand grenades exploded at his feet and a knee-mortar shell detonated within five yards of him but the Woodcliff farm boy stood his ground. As fast as he sighted the Nips through the murky haze McKinney knocked them down with his M-1.

Technical Sergeant Alfred W. Johnson, second-in-command of Company A's Weapons Platoon, reported that when activity finally simmered down around McKinney, he and several other men were able to fight through to the Georgian and help him dispatch a few survivors. In recounting the sight that greeted him, Johnson said: "We found McKinney in firing position, bleeding profusely from a head wound. The light machine gun lay against his feet in the foxhole. He assured us that he was OK. There were—by actual count—thirty-eight freshly slaughtered Japs stacked in piles of twos and threes around the emplacement within a fifteen-yard radius. Another few paces away lay two more, slumped over a knee mortar. Those Nips all belonged to Mac; the rest of us had our hands full fifty yards away where they also came into the perimeter unobserved."

Final tabulation of casualties disclosed that ninety-five of the enemy had been slain on the sand bar. American and Filipino casualties combined showed three dead and seven wounded. Captain Ice immediately submitted Private First Class McKinney's name for an award of the Medal of Honor. In due time it cleared all necessary channels and,



*Half-starved enemy prisoners taken at Dingalan Bay await transportation to I Corps headquarters*

like Kerstetter of the 130th Infantry, the country boy from the South received the Nation's highest award from the hands of President Truman at a White House ceremony.

Numerous other acts of gallantry occurred during the unexpected dawn attack, although none matched McKinney's for sheer courage. S/Sgt. Neal A. Cowin, later commissioned in the field, earned the Silver Star for leaving the perimeter to repair a broken telephone line under heavy enemy fire. Cowin led a section of machine guns from Company D, 136th Infantry. His platoon leader, T/Sgt. Victor J. Wendling, received the same award for saving an officer's life in addition to killing five of the enemy. Wendling saw a Nip sneak up on Lt. Max Ladin, commanding a section of heavy mortars, while the lieutenant was computing firing data at the guns. Sergeant Wendling shot the Jap at the precise moment he was about to decapitate Lieutenant Ladin with a heavy sword. Seconds later when the Nips charged his position, the Saginaw, Michigan, noncom stopped them with rifle fire.

Lieutenant Voss and Sgt. LeRoy Nix of Company A also won the Silver Star during the sand bar fracas. Voss kept the attached guerrillas from becoming panicked during the initial stages of the fight. The enemy move came so abruptly that the Filipinos were unable to retain organization. A few of them began to shout and race around the

perimeter. Lieutenant Voss ignored enemy fire long enough to leave his foxhole, round up the guerrillas and lead a counterattack which expelled the Japs from the Filipinos' original position.

Sergeant Nix's Silver Star stemmed from his boldness and dexterity with a mortar. In the first phase of the fight, a Nip knee mortar registered in on Nix's gun and was on the verge of finding its emplacement. Nix rose to sight the enemy muzzle flash and responded with counterbattery fire which silenced the Nip piece and killed its crew. Later, a group of Japanese who had managed to infiltrate through the front line of holes, converged on Nix's position. Sergeant Nix rounded up a few guerrillas, reorganized his crewmen into a rifle squad and polished off the invaders in a brief hand-to-hand struggle. This accomplished, he resumed perimeter fires which caught many of the enemy as they sought to back out of the installation.

One major decision evolved from the fight on the sand bar: Corps and Connolly both realized that a single rifle company was not enough to contain the hundreds of Nips who infested Dingalan Bay. As a result Corps moved in reinforcements on the afternoon of the 11th and notified Connolly that his force would be disbanded as soon as all elements of the relieving 1st Battalion, 136th Infantry, were in position.

On 17 May at 0800 Connolly Task Force relinquished responsibility for Dingalan Bay and reverted back to the 123d Infantry. Its record stood as a tribute to the fighting qualities of its men: from 12 April to 16 May the force accounted for 368 Japanese dead and took 22 prisoners. In turn, it suffered the remarkably light toll of two men killed and three wounded. Succeeding the force was Ehrlich Task Force, built along the same lines and named for Lt. Col. Milton Ehrlich, lanky, semi-bald commander of the 1st Battalion, 136th Infantry. Lt. Colonel Ehrlich's command was also extended to include all Rangers and guerrillas in the bay area.

Activity was in no way affected by the change of personnel. As a matter of fact, the Ehrlich force was blessed with matériel and transportation which Connolly had requested but was unable to obtain. At the same time that command of Dingalan Bay forces passed to Lt. Colonel Ehrlich, I Corps dispatched several LVTs and LCMs to the bay-front CP. These were employed with excellent results several days later when task force elements commenced to patrol the Umiray closer to its source.

There was no change in the mission. Lt. Colonel Ehrlich was charged with continuing the task assigned to Connolly. When his battalion was finally in position, it lined up like this: Company B, commanded

by Lt. William S. Harris, occupied the sand bar at the mouth of the Umiray. Most of the battalion's heavy weapons were attached to this unit. Captain Cavender's Able Company set up its headquarters adjacent to the Corps sawmills in Bitoluk and patrolled the roads and trails for ten miles around the small *barrio*. Men from Company A also manned a series of trailblocks erected at regular intervals along the Bitoluk-Dingalan Bay road. For CP security Lt. Colonel Ehrlich employed the antitank and ammunition and pioneer platoons out of Battalion Headquarters Company. Company C assumed positions in the general vicinity of task force headquarters but was not charged with its defense. Instead, Captain Fox's unit was designated as task force "trouble shooters;" a rested mobile reserve prepared to strengthen any point in the Dingalan Bay area on a moment's notice.

To no one's surprise, most of Ehrlich Force's action centered around Baker Company at the mouth of the river. Despite the enemy's abortive 11 May assault, they still coveted the barren sand bar with its life-saving stocks of GI rations. Although their subsequent efforts lacked the numbers and organization of the War Against McKinney, the Japanese continued to throw squads and platoons against the outpost. Now, however, the perimeter was armed to the teeth and the Nips were cut down as soon as they appeared in the open. In little more than a week of these tactics, 108 Japs met their deaths at the hands of Baker riflemen and Dog machine gunners. No friendly troops fell casualty.

Corps' magnanimous gift of amphibious vehicles permitted Company B to vastly widen the scope of its activities. With adequate land and water transportation available it was now possible to go out and meet the Nip rather than wait for him to appear at the sand bar installation. On several occasions a reinforced platoon was loaded on LVTs and carried southward to known Japanese assembly areas on the coast of Luzon. Never before molested in these locations, the enemy invariably fell a victim to these surprise strikes. Baker Company fast became known within the 1st Battalion, 136th Infantry, as the Butchers of the Bay.

On one amphibious patrol, however, this fast-growing reputation suffered a serious reverse. Lieutenant Harris took one of his platoons, backed it up with two bazookas and a section of light machine guns and pointed for a section of the beach reported to house a sizable Nip colony. The trip down was uneventful, all hands wondering whether the outfit's luck would hold up. As the lumbering Alligators rolled to a stop on the palm-fringed beach the platoon went over the side,

deployed into a wide skirmish line and sprinted for the cover of the trees. Back at the LVTs machine gunners were ready to lay down a blanket of covering fire. Suddenly the Japanese "force" emerged from the bush and charged down on Baker Company.

It consisted of precisely five women. More shock could not have been manifested had Yamashita himself appeared from those trees clad in BVDs and Samurai sword.

One, dressed in a Jap officer's shirt with the tails hanging loosely over a tattered skirt, approached the company commander and offered to show him their living quarters. As she guided the Baker leader to a large pit shielded from the sun by a grass-thatched roof, the emaciated Nip maiden told him in excellent English how her "squad" happened to be in that particular sector.

"We moved to Dingalan Bay shortly after you started air strikes in the Manila area last year," she explained. "Ten of us were among the entourage of a Japanese colonel. Then you came here and forced us away from the village. That took away our food. Five of us have slowly starved to death. When the soldiers saw you coming this morning they ran for the hills, but we decided to give ourselves up."

Harris too had a story to tell as he lingered outside the S-2 tent after returning to headquarters with his "prisoners."

"We may have had an uneventful voyage out, but the trip back held enough excitement for me," he went on. "Those girls were willing to seduce a whole boatload of GIs for a single can of C ration. And you should have seen the hole where the five of them lived. It was cluttered with ladies' unmentionables, kimonos, face powder, hair brushes and most everything else needed to round out a lady's boudoir. For a second I thought I was standing next to the cosmetics counter in the Evansville, Indiana, five-and-dime store. Nylons? No, that's one item they didn't have."

Lieutenant Colonel Ehrlich's task force was closed out on this note. On 30 May Corps issued orders directing that the 1st Battalion, 136th Infantry, return to the Division, now in Baguio. General Swift's headquarters was wholly satisfied with the results obtained by the force. In its brief period of operation, the unit accounted for 276 of the enemy plus 32 prisoners of war. All of Ehrlich's battalion reached Camp John Hay on the afternoon of 1 June. Their confidence primed by two weeks of successful hunting, the veterans of Skyline Ridge looked forward to the rest and relaxation afforded by the cool Baguio climate.

## Chapter 16: The Mountain Trail

**B**AGUIO'S capture precipitated an ironic situation in the 33d Division. "Take Baguio!" was the battle-cry that had echoed through the infantry regiments as tired doughboys peeled the Japs from each bulwark in their vast defense in depth. The seizure of the summer capital was supposed to have been the climax for the Golden Cross: the reward for months of bloody campaigning along Kennon Road, Pugo Trail, and through the forbidding Galiano Valley. It was to have been the end—the mission accomplished. Still, at the precise moment that the flag was being raised over liberated Baguio, elements of the 136th Infantry were engaged in their most furious fighting in Luzon.

Baguio did not end it for the 136th or for the other regiments. Corps said there was more to be done. Rest for the weary was several fights away.

Nevertheless, the Division could take some measure of joy from the fact that the capture of Baguio started the Japanese on their downhill slide. Although a few enemy groups along the outskirts of the city resisted with their usual tenacity, evidences of a complete Japanese disintegration were unmistakable. When the Nips left Baguio they did so hastily and with a minimum of organization. Large stockpiles of supplies and matériel remained cached in the summer capital. Jap wounded were either murdered in their hospital beds by their own doctors or left to perish unattended. Yamashita himself—no longer the feared Tiger of Malaya but simply Filipino-dubbed "Old Potato Face"—beat a swift retreat from his "impregnable" citadel and sought refuge in the mountains lining the Cagayan Valley to the north.

Victory in Northern Luzon was in the air. Everyone could sense it. The enemy acted in the manner of a thoroughly beaten boxer, dazed and reeling, needing only a final blow to conclude the fight. In four months I Corps had reduced his five-year defense plan for Northern Luzon to a mockery.

Once Baguio was secured, General Swift dictated new missions to the 33d and 37th Divisions. Pursuit of the fleeing Japanese fell to the Buckeyes who quickly struck out for Trinidad, a city five miles north of the summer capital. The 33d was ordered to clean up enemy remnants around Loacan Airfield and scour the Antamok-Itogon vicinity for additional Nip survivors of the Baguio drive.

Colonel Serff's 3d Battalion, thus far denied a glimpse of Baguio, quickly combed out the Loacan zone while the 2d Battalion, 130th Infantry, swept the area to the southeast, pushing down the rutted road that led from Antamok to Itogon. It was in this sector that the Golden



Cross added to its reputation as the "Money Division" of the Pacific. Numerous rich gold mines, annexed by the Japanese after the collapse of General Wainwright's 1942 defense, were scattered throughout the craggy hills surrounding these *barrios*.

Combat patrols were often forced to descend the shafts of these properties and probe the underground levels for Nipponese parties. Occasionally, small rifle and grenade actions occurred inside the mines. More often, however, 130th Infantry patrols found the levels strewn with the bodies of enemy troops. Some of these were suicides who preferred death to surrender, but the larger number were Japs who had been coldly butchered to facilitate the withdrawal from Baguio. Rather than retard the fleeing column, the enemy killed off his lag-guards and flung their bodies into the shafts.

In the course of Antamok-Itogon patrolling two of the largest gold lodes in the Philippine Islands were wrested from the Nips. One was the famous Balatoc Lode near Itogon, housing one of the richest veins in the Orient. The other, at Antamok, was the Consolidated Benguet Mine which had a 1940 yield of seventy-five million pesos in gold.

No one in the 123d and 130th Infantry Regiments was used to this sort of war. Enemy opposition was flimsy. The Nip defended no ground; instead he attempted to cover his withdrawals behind poorly organized rear guards. Consequently, Golden Cross troops caught many of them moving through the exposed valleys, oblivious to anything but escape. Patrols were able to work up to commanding heights overlooking these escape routes and throw plunging fire into the Japanese.

Doughs called the period from 29 April to 5 May a "gentleman's war." Trucks picked them up at their Baguio camps shortly after breakfast and carried them to an area of operations. M-7s, scout cars from the Recon Troop, or attached tanks always accompanied the foot troops in the event that unexpected opposition was encountered. There was never a day when a company emplaced on top of a hill could not sight small groups of Japs picking their way northward toward the Mountain Trail and Ambuclao. Golden Cross infantrymen would then unleash everything from carbines to 105s. At the conclusion of the day's hunt, trucks would be waiting on the nearest road to speed them back to their tents at Baguio.

Any possible counteraction against Baguio—even by suicide groups—was dispelled by the patrols and roadblocks of the 123d and 130th Infantry Regiments. As far as the enemy was concerned, Baguio was lost. His only hope of retaining a foothold in Luzon lay in making a stand north of the city.

Corps anticipated such a move. On 1 May an order reached Division headquarters alerting the 33d for an advance into the mountains north of Baguio. At this time it became imperative for Corps to free the 37th Division from the Baguio area. The 32d and 25th Divisions were nearing the ends of the Villa Verde Trail and Balete Pass, respectively, and their simultaneous entrance into the broad Cagayan Valley was expected momentarily. Once this breach was gained, General Swift desired a comparatively fresh division for the chase through the flatland. Shortly after the alert was received General Clarkson was summoned to the Corps CP at Rosales and given orders to relieve the Buckeyes at Trinidad.

Immediately upon his return to the summer capital, the Golden Cross commander issued Division Field Order No. 20 dated 2 May, directing units of the 123d and 130th Infantry Regiments to take over the positions of the 129th Infantry. The relief was to be completed by 1200 on 5 May.

All units were in position at the appointed time: the 3d Battalion, 123d Infantry, back from Kennon Road, at Trinidad, and the 2d Battalion, 130th Infantry, just south of Acop's Place. Their mission was defined as "vigorous combat patrols and reconnaissance in force in the Trinidad-Acop's Place sector." The Corps commander specifically forbade a Division drive. That was to follow at a later date.

One of the main arteries in the Northern Luzon wilderness is a narrow, winding dirt road known as Mountain Trail. Curling its way from Trinidad to Bontoc, the road finally emerges into the cultivated expanses of the Cagayan Valley. Throughout its length Mountain Trail is carved out of pine-covered hills and ridges. On the open side of the roadway the ground falls off precipitously to jungle-laden ravines hundreds of feet below, while the other extreme is evident on the closed side where the mountains sharply rise to mile-high levels.

Intelligence reports compiled by the 37th Division indicated that a major enemy garrison had built a strong defense in depth in the eight miles of mountain separating Acop's Place from Tabio. For the 130th Infantry, the "gentleman's war" of Antamok-Itogon became a thing of the past. The regiment was faced with the same brutal mountains with rocky cliffs shearing their sides and the same twisted conglomeration of gullies and valleys that had drawn out the Battle for Baguio. But three principal differences separated Mountain Trail campaigning from the category of the Asin Tunnel and Question Mark Hill fights.

First of all, it wasn't the same old Jap. The enemy near Acop's Place was just as wily and cunning, but he lacked the supplies and matériel



*General Krueger was a frequent front-line visitor. Behind the Sixth Army commander are Lieutenant Colonel James B. Faulconer and General Clarkson.*

which had enabled him to stall Division advances in the early days of the Luzon show. Secondly, the weather was more conducive to successful combat operations. In place of the humid, nauseating heat encountered prior to the liberation of the summer capital, doughs resumed the chase in the cool, rarefied atmosphere peculiar to Baguio. Troops entering the line north of the city augmented their combat loads with field jackets and blankets; an odd sight compared to these same riflemen a month ago who then carried nothing heavier than a poncho. The skyscraping evergreen country was generally cool during the day and exceptionally chilly after sundown. ●

Finally, there was a major difference in terrain. The lie of the land was such that each Japanese hill-holding force was virtually isolated. From 15 February until Baguio fell, the Nips invariably held the high ground not only confronting attacking doughs but dominating terrain on either flank as well. They could, therefore, fortify these points with a view to all-around defense. Not any more. Due to the deep, wide valleys running parallel to the road in the Mountain Trail area, the Jap could not bolster the defense of one ridge by placing troops on adjoining ridges. They were too far apart to be mutually supporting.

Now it was possible to concentrate on attacking in one direction without fear of reprisal along the flanks and rear.

The Acop's Place-Tabio ridge looked formidable. Long, low saddles cut horizontal swaths across it, breaking the entire terrain feature into a series of separate targets. Each knob was known to be fortified. It was obvious to regimental headquarters that when the advance was resumed, the ridge would assume high priority. For the sake of convenience in planning, each separate hill was given a name. The one closest to the regiment was named Pyramidal Hill with Flat Top, Naked Tree, Round Top, Chocolate Drop, Horizon Ridge, Totem Pole and Bald Top following in close succession.

Lieutenant Colonel Faulconer, the 2d Battalion commander, gradually supplanted his initial reconnaissance patrols with combat-recon groups up to platoon strength. Operating without the pressure generally applied by higher headquarters, these patrols had sufficient time to methodically rake through the Acop's Place hills. By 15 May elements of Companies E and F, led by Captains Unrein and Dellinger, with Recon Troop elements attached, had searched out Mountain Trail to a point three thousand yards northeast of their battalion base.

Patrol reports were both encouraging and depressing. As a fighter the Jap was only a shadow of his former self. He was poorly equipped, half-starved, and low in morale. But the enemy's constant ally—terrain—refused to desert him. Reconnaissance parties found the dirt road to be in foul shape. Huge logs, oversized boulders, mines, and landslides blocked forward progress. Fortunately, time was on the Blackhawks' side. With Division still waiting for Corps' "go ahead," it was possible to have supporting arms and services come up and clear the path for the anticipated infantry drive. Meanwhile, patrolling could continue.

Company B, 108th Engineers, attached to the 130th Infantry, sent up bulldozers and mine-clearing squads. With a platoon of infantry as security, and a tank following in the rear as added protection, the engineers were able to open Mountain Trail to vehicular traffic in a few days. While the engineers were sweeping the trail, Lt. Colonel Faulconer developed his battalion base at Acop's Place into an impregnable perimeter. Colonel Collins termed it "the strongest defensive position ever held by the regiment in Luzon" as he inspected sand-bagged emplacements, clear fields of fire, and the maze of protective barbed wire encircling the position.

Even though they were still in combat, 130th Infantry troops did not find life at Acop's Place unbearable. Colonel Collins had com-

pany kitchens brought forward and set into the perimeter. Soon all troops were receiving two hot meals daily. Mail was carried up and distributed the same day that it arrived at APO 33 in Baguio. Covered pillboxes were speedily constructed and Blackhawk infantrymen were no longer at the mercy of the elements. Patrol requirements were rotated so that most troops could obtain adequate rest between assignments. And to top it off, the Nips wanted no part of the 2d Battalion's forbidding position. Occasionally a few made forays against the outer defenses but they were invariably beaten off with automatic fire.

Colonel Collins felt certain that his regiment would be ultimately charged with reducing the Acop's Place-Tabio ridge. While waiting for Corps to give the Division its head, "The Ripper" scheduled daily air strikes against the objective. Cubs flew reconnaissances over the ridge, selecting the strongest-appearing enemy installations as first-priority targets. Artillery liaison pilots' finds, coupled with ground reports, were entered on Air Force charts and photographs. When the P-51s finally appeared for the actual strike, Golden Cross L-4s led them over the ridge and marked primary targets with white phosphorus grenades.

An air strike near Acop's Place drew more spectators than a carnival. As soon as the roar of the Mustangs approaching the target was heard, 2d Battalion riflemen swarmed out of their pillboxes and jostled each other for the best seats on the crest of the hill. Each Napalm or HE explosion brought cheers from the assemblage.

For the Blackhawks, this was combat at its best. Each crunch of an exploding bomb meant less Nips to contend with when they finally advanced against the ridge. Each shimmering sea of flame that followed the drop of Napalm meant less concealment for the enemy. When the Air Force finished their runs, 33d Division Artillery immediately took up the slack and maintained the high-explosive pounding. This was one time when the Jap was really taking it and had no answer to send over in reply.

The Corps order came through on 30 May: "... Secure high ground between Acop's Place and Tabio. Continue along Mountain Trail, keeping the road open, until Tabio is seized. . ."

After weeks of planning, patrolling and pounding, the 130th Infantry needed nothing more than the word to go. The stage had long since been set. Morale was high; troops had shaken off the effects of the exhausting advance to Baguio.

D-day on Mountain Trail arrived the following morning. At the crack of dawn all firing batteries of the 124th Field Artillery Battalion



*Mountain Trail wound through some of the highest terrain in the Philippines*

turned their guns on Pyramidal Hill. Volley after volley thundered into the target. Lt. Colonel Talbott's 1st Battalion moved through 2d Battalion positions at Acop's Place shortly after breakfast and advanced toward the base of Pyramidal. War in Luzon was on again. The "armistice" was over.

Shells continued to smash the objective as the assault company began its laborious ascent to the crest. Heavy machine guns and mortars opened up at this point to augment artillery fires. As the lead scouts paused short of the summit, all fires abruptly shifted from Pyramidal to Flat Top, the towering knob just beyond the initial objective. A stream of riflemen came over the crest of the hill while the enemy was vainly fighting to throw off the shock action of the howitzers. Weeks of pounding had been too much for the Jap, and he could make only a token effort to defend his strongpoint. In a matter of minutes the entire enemy garrison went down before the infantrymen's small-arms fire. Pyramidal Hill came fast and easy.

Remaining daylight hours were spent in sweeping the draws and gullies running down the hillside. During this mopping up phase, other elements of the 1st Battalion drove up Mountain Trail, moving their line parallel to the foot of Pyramidal Hill. Flat Top was next. "The Ripper" was anxious to prevent enemy reorganization. He pulled his 3d Battalion into the fight from its Baguio rest camp and had Lt. Colonel Blake's doughs take over 1st Battalion positions as soon as



Pyramidal became 130th Infantry property. The attack was scheduled to be resumed the following day.

Flat Top received the same type of artillery concentration that had hit the Pyramidal Hill defenders. Plans of attack and fire coordination were identical. Item and King Companies, now commanded by Capts. John Crowther and Kennedy, respectively, took over spearhead duties. Again the tremendous effects of artillery fire allowed riflemen to walk onto the objective unopposed. If anything, the Flat Top defense was more feeble than the Japs' pitiful stand on Pyramidal. Major Ernest Kenny, regimental S-3, checked Flat Top off the operations map at 0930.

Combat for the day did not end with the capture of the second objective. With all companies active, the battalion swept down the ridge, going up and over each hillock in the manner of a Coney Island roller coaster. By dark Blackhawk troops had taken Naked Tree, Round Top and Chocolate Drop. Casualties for the day in the 130th Infantry were one killed in action, six wounded. The enemy lost sixty-one counted dead.

Horizon Ridge, next on the regimental agenda, appeared to harbor trouble. Artillery liaison pilots, reconnoitering from the air, radioed back to headquarters that the enemy had several machine-gun emplacements on Horizon Ridge, each sited to cover avenues of approach. Thick walls of sod—similar to the stone fences sprinkled throughout the New England countryside—concealed enemy movements on top of the hill. Not only was the position surrounded by such barriers, but others had been erected which sliced through the position at odd angles. By moving along the bases of these walls, the Japanese were able to take covered routes in travelling from one point to another within the small fortress.

Kennedy's King Company was brought up to Chocolate Drop as soon as it was seized and alerted for the attack against Horizon Ridge. Artillery and infantry commanders worked out a fire-support plan designated to neutralize the skein of fence-like fortifications atop Horizon Ridge. Steady howitzer fire was to remain on the target until the forward platoons were within assaulting range. Then, at the precise moment that artillery fires were lifted, 81mm mortars would open up on the reverse slope. It was hoped that the switch from artillery to mortars would go unnoticed by the enemy and that the ridge could be occupied while they remained under cover.

Anxious to maintain the initiative, Lt. Colonel Blake sent the 3d Battalion forward at dawn in a column of companies with K in the lead. Love and Item followed in that order. The artillery-mortar

switch worked to perfection. As the barrage changed from 105mm shells to 81s King Company stormed the enemy strongpoint. At last the groggy Japanese came staggering out of their foxholes toward their machine guns—but too late. They were mowed down in the open. Even if they had succeeded in working back to their pillboxes and bunkers their subsequent efforts would have been fruitless. Howitzer fire had destroyed or buried more than fifteen Nip machine guns.

While his company was combing through the walled-in position, Captain Kennedy noticed a group of Japanese converging on a small hill approximately three hundred yards farther up the ridgeline. The resourceful Oregonian decided to gamble on the possibility that these Nips were remnants and not part of a force assigned to defend the knob. Reorganizing his men, Kennedy took them forward, hoping to engage the enemy before they had an opportunity to develop the position. Observers at the battalion OP were dumbfounded to see a green-clad wave drive through the saddle separating the hills and quickly mount the crest. Fortunately, artillery and mortar FOs retained enough presence of mind to suspend their fires.

For a moment the command group could not determine whether the people in the saddle were advancing Americans or retreating Japanese. Their enigma was cleared up when Kennedy radioed Lt. Colonel Blake: "Have secured the rest of Horizon Ridge. Am now mopping up in gullies surrounding my position. No casualties." With this, orders came from battalion directing the rifle companies to halt all advances and fortify the newly captured territory. It was now late afternoon and dark clouds were beginning to close over the top of Horizon Ridge.

Ridgetop advances had long since outdistanced progress along Mountain Trail proper. As the Japanese fell back, they dynamited the adjacent cliffside in many places, causing several huge landslides. Traffic was completely blocked. The Jap was clever in this respect. Weeks before, when he was alone in this sector, he registered 75mm mountain guns, located in the hills near Tabio, on every curve and dip in the road. When engineers and infantry came up to clear the trail, the Jap shelled them with accurate fire from these concealed pieces. Casualties were few, but one Nip round knocked out an engineer bulldozer.

Shortly after Lt. Colonel Blake's order to "dig in and hold," an artillery forward observer at the battalion OP spotted a column of troops running at full speed across a shallow cut leading from Bald Top to Totem Pole. The mustard-colored uniforms and unwieldy



*General Joseph W. Stilwell and Colonel Collins (with carbine) at a Mountain Trail command post*

Arisaka rifles of the Japanese were unmistakable despite almost-opaque clouds enveloping 3d Battalion positions. It penetrated in a split-second. Counterattack!

An emergency call went to the artillery for fire on the cut. Lt. Colonel Carlson's 124th Field Artillery took this mission and rapidly adjusted on the target. Peering through his field glasses, the artillery observer could see Jap bodies blown clear out of the cut as they were caught by HE blasts. The cut became a holocaust of bursting shells. A few Nips got out, but Company I, now alerted as to enemy intentions, brought them down with rifle and BAR fire.

Luzon was slashed wide open during the first week in June. In other division sectors of I Corps the 32d and 25th Infantry Divisions had finally managed to hack their way through Villa Verde Trail and

Balete Pass. These two divisions spilled out of the mountains onto the threshold of the flat Cagayan Valley. Months of bitter fighting had sliced Yamashita's crumbling 14th Area Army into a series of pockets which stretched from Acop's Place on Mountain Trail to Aparri on the northern tip of the island.

General Beightler's Buckeye Division, rested and poised for the drive up the fertile flatland that would administer the *coup de grâce* to the erstwhile "Tiger," was pulled up to the southern entrance of the Cagayan Valley and given a free rein. Backed up by one of the most gigantic displays of power ever turned loose against the Japanese, the 37th Division was cutting through the Jap defenses like a hot knife through butter.

Nevertheless, the countless pockets scattered the length and breadth of Luzon held several thousand enemy. They remained capable of engineering large-scale harassments of lines of supply and communication. Actually, if no precautionary measures were taken, the Jap had enough left in men and weapons to swing around the rear of the flying 37th, and engage rear echelon groups which were supporting the spearhead elements.

Corps readily recognized the need for protecting the Buckeyes' naked rear and for liquidating Jap remnants. He enlarged the Golden Cross mission while the 130th Infantry was pushing northeast from Acop's Place to Tabio. The original mission, including the capture of Tabio, was to be continued, but in addition General Swift directed that Division elements break off Mountain Trail at the junction of the Bokod road and move east. Troops of the 6th Division were making a similar forward-lateral movement to the west. From a tactical standpoint, a junction between these two divisions would pen all Jap remnants into the Cagayan Valley sector where they would fall easy prey to the 37th Division.

Air reconnaissance disclosed that the Bokod road forked away from Mountain Trail at KP 21, a junction two and a half miles south of Tabio. From KP 21, the road followed the ridge sides through Panasan, Laboy, Inticak, and the Agno River Valley to the small Igorot *barrio* of Ambuclao. From there it skirted a long, scenic valley into Bokod. Aerial photos showed the Bokod Valley to be dotted with native shacks and lush with tropical fruits. Papaya, mango, and banana groves were in abundance on the valley's gently rolling slopes. Large rice paddies covered its floor.

Intelligence reports estimated that large numbers of enemy troops

infested the Bokod Valley, attracted by the promise of food. Also, it represented a natural route of withdrawal for them. Travel on a road—even a poor one—was far more rapid and comfortable than a cross-country retreat.

Command and staff groups within the 130th Infantry quickly adopted an over-all tactical plan. Two battalions would drive toward Ambuclao from the west: one by way of the Bokod road and the other along the lofty ridgelines overlooking the road. The third was to be held back as a reserve force. It looked like a repetition of Mountain Trail tactics. The conditions of both roads was similar. Retreating Japs, en route to the Bokod Valley, had blown large gaps in the road and had also blasted the walls of the ridges causing landslides. Photos showed the road to be blocked in a score of exposed places. Even in the planning stage it became evident that supply and fire support would pose a terrific problem. The Bokod road could not take supply and artillery traffic. When the plan went into effect each eastward step would take the Blackhawks that much farther from supply bases. Too many steps and the line would snap.

Before actual accomplishment of the new task could be considered however, it was first necessary for the 130th Infantry to secure KP 21 and clean up the Tabio phase of the operation.

Antitank and Love Companies left the Horizon Ridge area on the morning of 4 June with Bald Top as their objective. Again well placed artillery fire transformed a tough job into a relatively simple one. The hill fell after a brief fight, yielding with it two of the 75mm mountain guns that had worked over engineer and infantry repair parties along Mountain Trail. KP 21 was plainly visible from the crest of Bald Top. Antitankers, commanded by Capt. Power Bethea, moved down to the trail following the fall of Bald Top and advanced on KP 21. Love Company set out for the same objective, employing a long spur running down from Bald Top to the junction as its avenue of approach.

Bald Top served as a guardian for KP 21. When it fell, the road junction defenses went down with it. The actual intersection was defended by exactly two Nips holed up in a large mud-and-log pillbox. As foot troops closed in on KP 21, two tanks rolled up to the front. One of the mediums stood back two hundred yards from the enemy emplacement and threw a point-blank salvo into the embrasure. Antitank Company walked on to the intersection.

With the junction in 130th Infantry hands, troops at the scene set out to consolidate their holdings. One company—Antitank—moved



*Casualties north of Baguio were evacuated via Jap jeep ambulance*

off the roadway and took over a piece of high ground north of KP 21. Company L began to scour out nearby ravines in search of stragglers. Sensing no further action on the road proper, both tanks continued up to the junction where the crews unbuttoned the hatches and clambered out for a smoke and a stretch. Three Japanese artillery rounds suddenly ploughed into KP 21, one making a direct hit on a tank and killing three men.

Enemy 90mm mortars took the artillery fires as an excuse to unleash a barrage of their own. Before the grayish haze of the explosions on KP 21 had cleared, mortar rounds began to pound Antitank positions just off the roadway. Efforts to locate the Nipponese guns were cut short when a foggy blanket descended from the skies and settled over all battalion perimeters. The mountain guns stilled their fires at the abrupt change in weather but the mortars continued to pour it on to Antitank Company until nightfall.

But now it was just a hop and a skip to Tabio. The desolate *barrio* nestled snugly on the reserve slope of a mountain mass due north of KP 21. Actually the twisted network of hills consisted of five distinct knobs stemming from the same long ridge. Tabio Ridge literally held the key to the city. It was the Blackhawks' final barrier.

An obvious route of approach for the 3d Battalion was to move up Mountain Trail, through KP 21, and then onto the ridge by means of a frontal assault. Lt. Colonel Blake rejected this plan. Its drawbacks were many. First of all there could be no element of surprise unless



the attack were made after dark. From the ridge, the Jap could count every blade of grass at KP 21. It would not take him long to anchor a defense in the path of the 3d Battalion. Equally important a consideration was the fact that the enemy had his artillery and mortars zeroed in on the road junction. Attempts to cross KP 21 conceivably could result in excessive casualties.

Instead, Lt. Colonel Blake rested his chance for success on a wide flanking maneuver. Company I, with two platoons of guerrillas attached, assembled behind the crest of Bald Top on the morning of 6 June. Moving downhill to the east, the force crossed Mountain Trail a thousand yards below KP 21 and dropped into a huge, bush-covered valley separating the Bokod road and Mountain Trail. Swinging wide to evade the scope of Japanese observation, the column skirted the walls of the valley until it reached a point below the Bokod road about a mile east of KP 21.

Now came the test. Item Company had to cross the exposed Bokod road and veer toward the left flank of the enemy-held strongpoint. It was a tense moment back at the CP. Commanders literally held their breath waiting for a Nip machine-gun tip-off that the column had been sighted and intercepted. Minutes passed with no word from the company. The tension dissolved a moment later when Captain Crowther radioed in his report: "We are about to cross the road. Will call back for fire support as soon as we reach the base of the ridge. Believe that we are still undetected by the enemy."

Crowther split the force into pairs and threes and had each group cross the open road in a single rush. A few minutes later he called Lt. Colonel Blake: "Give us everything you've got back there. We're on the way." Heavy machine guns on Bald Top opened up first, spraying the ridge with long bursts. Then the hollow pop of mortar shells leaving the tubes could be heard as Company M's 81s began a shelling of all suspected enemy positions. Supporting fires reached their full fury when Golden Cross artillery sent rounds screaming into the ridge-side. M-7s also joined in the melee.

Now observers could see Item Company scouts move up on the enemy flank. Another call came from the company CP: "Cease fire. We're moving in." The scouts charged over the crest and the remainder of the column followed. Rifles, BARs and grenades went into action. Surprised Nips clawed their way out of crumbling emplacements in an effort to push Company I back from the ridgetop. Before they could bring any concentrated fire to bear on the Blackhawks they were wiped out. Crowther made his final call to battalion: "Hill secured. Twenty-

four enemy killed. No friendly casualties." A bold gamble had paid handsome dividends. As soon as the adjoining knobs on the ridge were mopped up, Tabio would fall.

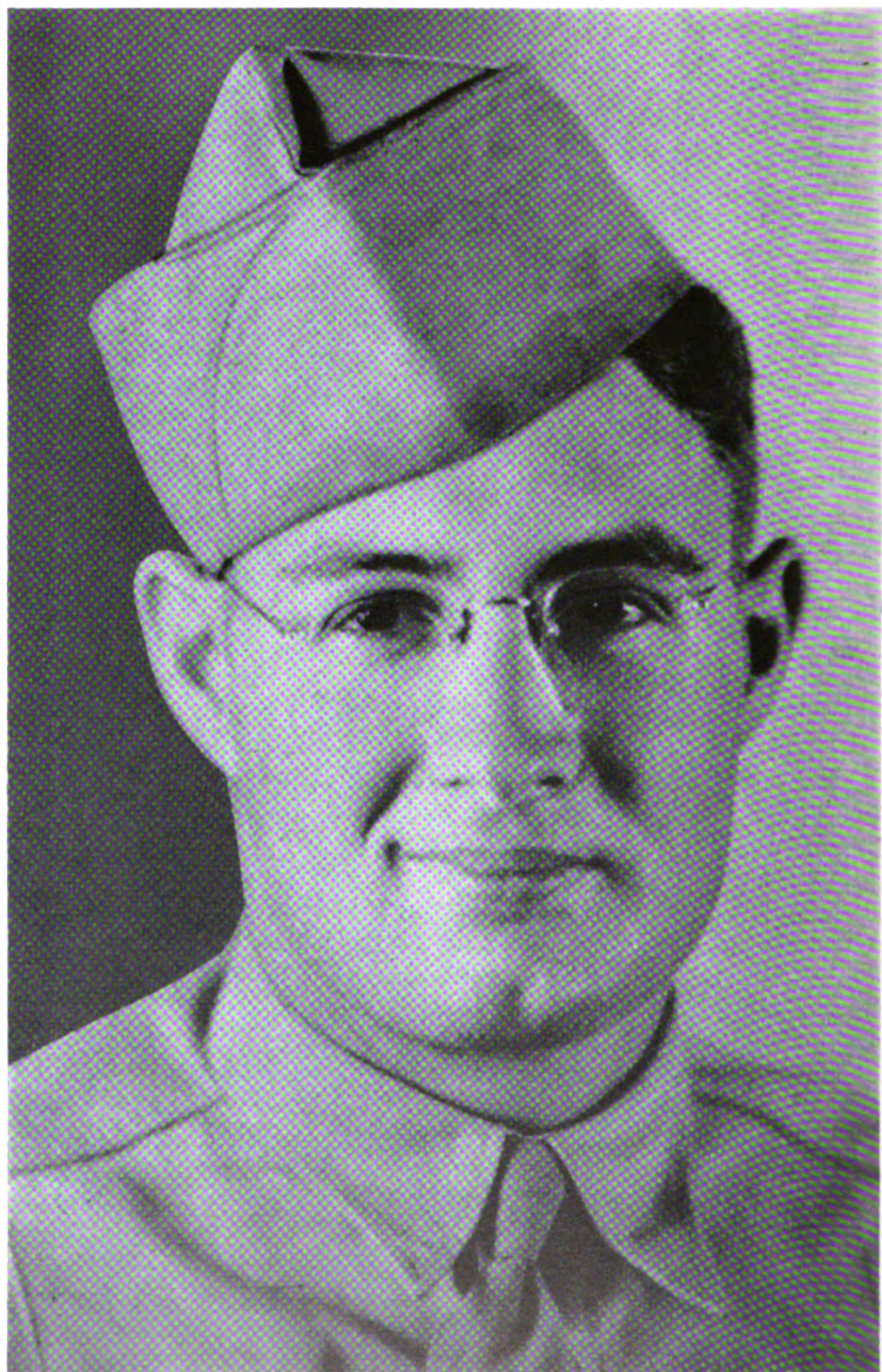
Battalion took immediate steps to protect its gains. Company L was summoned from Bald Top and given orders to proceed to Item Company and assist in holding the position. Lt. Colonel Blake and Colonel Collins felt that the Blackhawk foothold on the ridge would assume high priority when the enemy decided to counterattack. In an effort to bolster Crowther's position a company of Filipinos from the 1st Tarlac Regiment was sent forward to occupy a small hill rising midway between Item's perimeter and the CP. Occupation of this hill would preclude the possibility of an enemy cut-off of Companies I and L.

Staff Sergeant Howard E. Woodford, battalion S-2 sergeant, volunteered to guide the guerrilla group into position. He was instructed to lead the company to its position atop the hill and then return to the CP. It was mid-afternoon when the column finally got under way. Moving slowly, Woodford led his charges up a precipitous draw leading to his objective. Trees and vines blocked observation. Progress was difficult; even the sure-footed Filipinos had to struggle for balance during the steep climb. Sergeant Woodford finally sighted his objective.

As the column momentarily paused to re-group prior to moving on to the objective, three Nambus simultaneously opened up from point-blank range. One gun, in line with the axis of the guerrilla column, enfiladed the company while the others poured in fire from each flank. Panic seized the green, untried outfit. Most of them broke and scattered in the face of the machine-gun fire.

Woodford quickly sized up the situation. He got up from his instinctive prone position and charged full tilt toward the centrally located gun, working his M-1 as he ran. The Nips turned their fire on the 25-year-old Ohioan but he miraculously went unscathed. Sprinting up to the edge of the emplacement, Woodford flung a grenade into the embrasure. Turning around, he killed four more Japanese riflemen with M-1 fire. He quickly shouted for the Filipino bazooka team to join him on the hill.

Taking heart from this inspiring one-man stand, the guerrillas re-organized and the bazooka team went forward. Woodford then directed fire which put the flanking machine guns out of action. With all Nambus silenced, the Jap defense turned from stone into dust. The company walked onto the knob and began to dig in for the night. Sergeant Woodford next sent a runner back to battalion with news



*Staff Sergeant Howard E. Woodford*



of the fight and a request for engineer tools and an SCR-300. When the messenger and the radio returned to the guerrilla position, Woodford checked in with the Mike Company mortars and asked for protective fires in the many draws leading down from his position.

Mortar registration was completed by dusk. When all defensive preparations for the night were finished, Woodford radioed a report back to the CP. He received orders to return to the battalion. The young sergeant replied by requesting permission to stay with the guerrillas until the following morning. As his men were still shaken from the suddenness of the afternoon's action, Woodford felt that a steady-hand would do no harm in the event that the enemy sought to retake the ground. His request was granted.

The anticipated counterattack materialized that night at 0200. Approximately seventy-five enemy troops rushed the frail perimeter in one fanatical charge. As soon as movement was detected Woodford got his battalion's mortars on the -300 and asked for fires around his position. In a matter of seconds the dull crunch of exploding 81s mingled with the sound of the Japs' shrill "*Banzai!*" battle-cry. But desperate Nips, crazed with hunger, braved the heavy bombardment and charged on through the outer line of the perimeter defense. A shower of grenades rained on the Filipinos.

Fragments from one of the first Nip grenades found Woodford. But realizing the vital need for leadership at this critical point, he crawled out of his foxhole and travelled from position to position within his perimeter encouraging his troops to repel the attack. The Filipino infantrymen, still awed by Woodford's daytime demonstration of fearlessness, again responded and shouted defiance at the enemy.

Sergeant Woodford noticed a large gap develop in the line during his dashes from one point to another. Japs seemed to pour through it. Crouched over his rifle and pumping shots as he advanced, the alert veteran of Bench Mark beat back the Nips with M-1 fire. At the outer edge of the perimeter Woodford found a slit trench containing the bodies of two guerrillas who had been bayoneted in the enemy's initial thrust. He dropped into the hole and prepared to tighten his line with rifle fire and grenades. For the next two hours guerrillas in flanking foxholes could see Woodford's M-1 split the darkness in answer to each enemy drive against him.

Just as they had attacked without warning, the enemy suddenly broke contact and ghosted away into the night about a half-hour before dawn. The entire company—green hands no longer—breathed a collective sigh of relief. Unable to restrain their admiration, the Fili-

pinos whispered to each other of Woodford's heroism. But no sound was heard from the hole where Sergeant Woodford was last seen. Could it be that the American sergeant expected the Japanese to return?

At daylight Capt. Domingo D. Quibuyen, guerrilla commander, left his foxhole and checked the perimeter. He stepped over blood-covered Nip bodies as he headed straight for Sergeant Woodford's foxhole. Woodford lay sprawled in the hole, dead. Captain Quibuyen counted the bodies of thirty-seven enemy within a ten-yard radius of his emplacement. The Filipino soldier immediately established contact with the battalion CP and rendered a detailed report of the sergeant's unsurpassed intrepidity.

Several months later the Medal of Honor was presented to the dead doughboy's father, Mr. Dwight D. Woodford of Barberton, Ohio.

While the attack against Sergeant Woodford's perimeter was at its height another band of Japs struck at the Item-Love position, several hundred yards to the east. Again night-long grenade duels took place, but here the Nip made no attempt to actually pierce the Blackhawk line. He sought only to mask the main effort against the guerrillas which, if it had been successful, would have imperiled all battalion installations.

Commanders expected the dawn of 7 June to usher in a monumental day for the Blackhawks. Progress of late had fulfilled even the most optimistic predictions. Casualties were extremely moderate, many objectives had been overrun, troops were rested and keyed to a fighting pitch, and coordination between arms was superb. To top it off, the enemy had taken a severe mauling in the seven days of Mountain Trail advances. All 3d Battalion men anticipated the accomplishment of the first mission by sundown. It was inconceivable that the battalion would fail to crack the thin defense around Tabio.

But no attack was made on 7 June. Weather—a constant ally of the Jap once he had been deserted by terrain—precluded a continuation of the steady dawn-to-dusk pressure. At 1000 the inevitable fog drifted in, heavier than ever before, and totally blacked out all objectives. Without visibility, supporting weapons could not be registered. Colonel Collins had no alternative but to postpone the scheduled drive. By advancing through the foul weather the Blackhawks would be meeting the Jap on his own terms: rifleman against rifleman. Golden Cross howitzers, tanks, mortars and machine guns would be relegated to an inactive role.

Doughs in all battalion positions relaxed once word of the postpone-

ment was handed down. At the CP north of KP 21 troops walked around the perimeter voicing opinions to each other on when the weather would take a turn for the better. Suddenly a shot rang out. Headquarters men stood transfixed for a moment wondering whether the shot was a Jap-fired wild round or an accidental discharge from within the perimeter. Then another shot split the stillness. Doughs and commanders alike dove for their holes. A single Nip had worked up to the edge of the perimeter and selected his targets carefully. Real damage had been done.

The first round caught Lt. Colonel Truxtun in the brain and killed him instantly. The popular commander of the 210th Field Artillery Battalion had come up to the 3d Battalion area to personally direct artillery fires on Tabio. Major Balch, 3d Battalion executive officer, took the other bullet. He too suffered a head wound. Medics administered first aid to the stocky, slightly bald officer and immediately evacuated him to a field hospital. Major Balch lingered between life and death for several days but finally succumbed. Both men were mourned in the Division.

Pea-soup fog held sway over Mountain Trail for five solid days. During this period no attempts were made to continue on to Tabio. General Clarkson was in full accord with "The Ripper's" plan of moving only when full strength could be applied against the enemy. Neither wished to take unnecessary gambles with human lives.

Regimental headquarters put this interim period to good advantage. Plans for a speedy completion of the secondary mission were given finishing touches. The 3d Battalion was notified that Tabio would be its show when clear weather broke over Mountain Trail. Colonel Collins had the 2d Battalion brought up to KP 21 during a momentary lull in the overcast. It was readied to branch off onto the Bokod road as soon as the word was given. Supplies continued to come up from Baguio and large stockpiles of food and ammunition were assembled.

Finally the fog broke. On 12 June "The Ripper" ordered advances in all battalion sectors. Lt. Colonel Blake's unit—reinforced by Company B—began its attack on Tabio in the late morning. Simultaneously the 2d Battalion moved out on the high ground flanking the Bokod road. Both battalions rolled up substantial gains by nightfall. The 3d Battalion was dug in just outside Tabio and Lt. Colonel Faulconer's force had spanned the ridges until they overlooked the *barrio* of Panasan.

Tabio fell at noon the following day in the face of an all-out attack.





Members of the 210th Field Artillery Battalion pay their final respects to Lieutenant Colonel Thomas Truxtun, killed during the advance along the Mountain Trail

The enemy was literally buried beneath an avalanche of high explosives and then overrun by Blackhawk riflemen. As one rifleman put it, "The Nips crawled out of their shelters as soon as the barrage lifted and stood at parade rest." Not a single friendly casualty was incurred during the actual attack. General Clarkson ordered the 3d Battalion, 136th Infantry, then resting in Baguio, to relieve Lt. Colonel Blake's 3d Battalion at Tabio. Its mission consisted of mopping-up and long-range combat patrolling. The 130th Infantry battalion went back to Baguio for a rest.

As Lt. Colonel Blake took his men back to the summer capital, the 1st Battalion moved forward to join the fight. Colonel Collins sent it down the Bokod road to reinforce the 2d Battalion.

Blackhawks in the Bokod road sector found tough going. Enemy opposition was not an especially difficult problem. The Bokod road Jap was a far cry from the pre-Baguio Jap who was consistently well armed, high in morale, and in possession of near-impregnable positions. He couldn't halt the battalion. But weather and terrain could. The mile-high mountains ranging the length of the road did much to substantiate the doughboy's belief that he was facing the most rugged terrain encountered in the course of Pacific warfare. Tropical rains poured down on the road daily, drenching men and equipment and reducing trails to sticky quagmires.

While the 2d Battalion was striking along the muddy ridges lining the road, Lt. Colonel Talbott's unit kept pace on the roadway below. Easy and Fox Companies spearheaded the ridgeline advances while Able and Charley Companies were charged with performing the same task for the highway force. Superior strength in men and weapons told at every turn. Numerous enemy pockets were encountered in morning drives, but all were smashed without undue difficulty. Blackhaws began to bag enemy prisoners for the first time in their combat careers. Both battalions passed through Laboy at noon. Pausing there only to re-group, they moved on and by 1700 stood poised to hit Ambuclao.

Gains along every front should have provided reasons for rejoicing. Instead, they were sources of grave concern. Mud and landslides had finally combined to close down the Bokod road. Supply lines were ruptured. Each forward step brought the regiment closer to a link-up with the 6th Division, but also clouded an already critical supply picture. If it was next to impossible to supply the battalions at Ambuclao now, what would happen when they moved up to Bokod? The problem seemed to be insoluble.

Efforts were redoubled to determine an efficient method of servicing the fast-moving battalion columns. Artillery liaison pilots flew daily photo missions over the Bokod road hoping that ground commanders could locate an overlooked approach. Interpretation of these photographs indicated only that the low valleys near Ambuclao and Bokod would make ideal drop areas in the event that the two battalions had to be supplied by air. This knowledge was small consolation.

In a last-ditch attempt to keep the forward elements rolling, Colonel Collins took to the air on personal reconnaissance. He sought the same thing as other observers: a road or trail that followed the Bokod road into Ambuclao. The regimental commander vaguely remembered a narrow trail that branched to the east from Mountain Trail. He had spotted it during the fighting around Tabio. Quickly he instructed Lieutenant Brisely, his pilot, to head for the Tabio area. If nothing else, at least this trail represented a live possibility.

The light L-4 dipped below the clouds hovering around the *barrio*. After several minutes of orientation, Colonel Collins finally spotted an almost indistinguishable thread winding down the side of a high ridge. Brisely throttled down the Cub and slowly followed the trail as it cut to the east. As each mile unfolded beneath the wings of the small craft the regimental commander's hopes were buoyed. At last "The Ripper" spotted the eastern terminus of the trail. It ended at Ambuclao.

As soon as he jeeped back to his CP, Colonel Collins sent for the I&R Platoon leader. "The Ripper" told him to take the platoon and scout out the trail from beginning to end. Hours later this patrol arrived at 1st Battalion positions at Ambuclao and radioed its report. The leader strongly recommended that the new route supplant the slide-pocked Bokod road as the regimental supply line. He claimed that the ground was firmer, affording better footing. Another factor cited by the leader was the observation that the trail route was several hours faster than the road. Regiment capitalized on this information at once.

Several hundred carriers hauling thousands of pounds of vital supplies and impedimenta, left KP 21 for Ambuclao on the morning of 15 June. Two rifle companies of Filipino troops accompanied the train as security. But unfortunately the Ambuclao battalions could not wait for the supply column to reach their position. Higher headquarters was demanding a rapid completion of the mission. No delays would be countenanced. Regiment had no choice but to order an advance despite the fact that 1st and 2d Battalion rations were dangerously low.



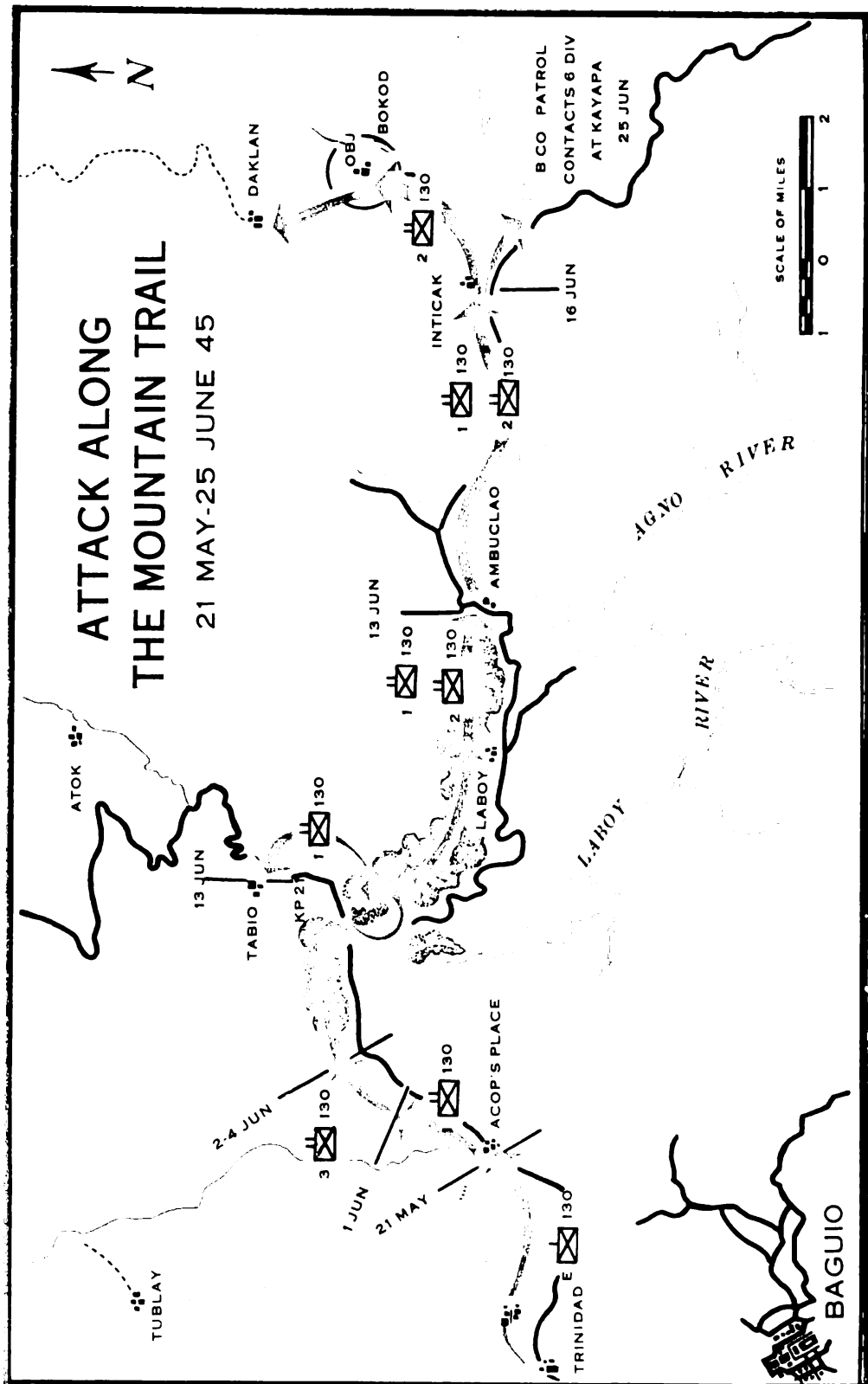


*An aerial photo of Ambaclao (lower right) and the surrounding terrain*

An air drop was scheduled to temporarily alleviate the food situation.

Fifth Air Force C-47s roared over the Ambaclao Valley on 15 June, even as the Filipino carriers were plodding along the trail route to the *barrio*. Regimental supply personnel flying with the airmen kicked out case after case of ammunition and K rations. Ordnance recovery was excellent but just a scant amount of food crates were located. As the 2d Battalion was scheduled to assume spearhead duties past Ambaclao, it received first priority. Lt. Colonel Faulconer's men were fully supplied while the 1st Battalion went on two-thirds ration. The situation was further complicated when the carriers pulled in that afternoon. They were completely exhausted from their rugged trip and unable to make their return until the following day. Consequently, they were forced to break open the same cases of rations that they had hauled forward for troop consumption. Dreams of a ration stockpile vanished.

During these developments the 2d Battalion left Ambaclao. Slight resistance was met after crossing the twisting Agno River but all fire fights were of short duration. The Nips simply faded before crushing fire superiority. After digging in for the night some four thousand yards from Ambaclao, the battalion commander reported to the regimental CP that 140 Japanese had been killed in the day's campaigning. One Blackhawk had been fatally wounded but there were no other casualties.



Map 26

One of the largest dumps captured by the Division in Northern Luzon was seized by the 130th Infantry during the day's operations—a Nip motor pool of more than fifty vehicles. Located some two thousand yards east of Ambuclao, the park held everything from heavy-duty trucks to a sleek, shiny Buick sedan. Souvenir hunters had a field day. A search unearthed such choice pickings as a neatly pressed Jap general's uniform, complete with ribbons. Far more thrilling a discovery was the sight of several sacks of rice in the pool's deserted field kitchen. Doughs built small fires and cooked the food in their steel helmets.

At this stage of the campaign Blackhawk leaders were genuinely alarmed over the food and evacuation difficulties. As the spearhead advanced toward Bokod company commanders grew increasingly fearful of casualties. Except for on-the-spot first aid, a litter case had to be hauled clear back to Ambuclao before he could receive adequate medical care. Additional air drops and carrying parties had managed to bolster the ration situation at Ambuclao, but there was no way of getting needed supplies up to the spearhead. The number of Filipino carriers was limited. It took them a full day for a round trip from Mountain Trail to Ambuclao. If they were used to continue on to Lt. Colonel Faulconer's force, the Mountain Trail-Ambuclao line would suffer.

Captain Charles A. Campbell, in command of Regimental Headquarters Company, came up with the solution to these problems. He organized the famed "Ambuclao-Bokod Transit Company," a "corporation" dedicated to bringing supplies from rear area to front line. Captain Campbell worked out a relay system of transporting food that included the use of wrecked Jap jeeps, worthless trucks, and a herd of carabaos. It worked in this fashion: a food-laden carabao would waddle down the Bokod road from Ambuclao until the first landslide was encountered. There troops would unload the animals, work the boxes over the roadblocks, and into a Jap jeep or truck. From here, rations would be hauled to the next slide where they were removed from the vehicles, again carried over the obstacle and then reloaded on a carabao or another vehicle. The system was slow and not very dazzling, but it worked. The big drawback, of course, was the limited amount of supplies that could be transported in this fashion.

Advances continued and by dusk of the 16th, the 3d Battalion was within striking distance of the Bokod Valley. That morning the 1st Battalion had cleared Ambuclao en route to reinforce the drive on Bokod. Reports from Lt. Colonel Faulconer indicated that the Bokod



attack would take place the following morning. Air liaison officers told the battalion commander that they would "bomb" the Bokod Valley with ration boxes at 1000 if the 2d Battalion held it by that hour. Otherwise the drop would have to be postponed until the objective was in Blackhawk's hands. That evening in his nightly huddle with his company commanders, Lt. Colonel Faulconer stressed this point in issuing instructions for the valley attack: we take the valley by 1000 and we eat; we foul up and we starve.

Hungry doughboys needed no additional incentive. The mere thought of a cardboard box full of food—even corned pork loaf with carrots and apple flakes—did more for esprit than a pep talk from General MacArthur. The battalion struck hard and fast at dawn.

At the same moment that Easy, Fox and George Companies were engaged in clearing the valley the first ration plane appeared over the drop area. Without any ado rations were kicked out of cabin doors and medical supplies parachuted to earth. This precipitated an amazing situation. While one part of the battalion continued to run down and kill the enemy, another part of it set out on recovery missions. These recovery parties actually killed more Nips than the attacking units. If possible, the Nips were even hungrier than the Blackhawks and the sight of the food-filled crates was an irresistible temptation to them. Many abandoned their defense duties and ran toward the boxes. They were shot down or captured as they struggled to pry open the wood and wire containers. Bokod was secured at 1800. Lt. Colonel Talbott and the 1st Battalion pulled into the valley at that time.

General Clarkson had been a spectator to all Bokod road actions from jump-off time at Ambuclao until the valley was taken. The Division Commander usually spent three or four hours in the air each day observing operations with his pilot, Major Bortz. That evening he dropped a message to the regimental forward CP which read: "Congratulations on the fine results obtained by the 130th Infantry. I watched your entry into Bokod this morning. Nice going! Let us know what you need and we'll do all we can to shoot it along to you."

Both battalions spent the 18th and 19th mopping up stragglers scattered throughout Bokod and Inticak. The once-mythical food stockpile was now becoming a reality. Recovery parties generally went out reinforced with automatic weapons, for they would invariably find several Japanese clustered around the drop area. These drops soon became a Special Services function as well as a supply operation. They were the sole source of entertainment in Bokod. As soon as the planes came over everyone trained his eyes on the doors. When barbed wire



*The Daklan airstrip*

was parachuted down, jeers came from the audience. Ammunition brought boos. But food! The sight of K rations floating to earth was reason for huzzahs and raucous laughter. Commanders brightened at these humorous demonstrations. They showed one thing anyway: days of privation had failed to blunt morale.

Leg-weary riflemen of the 1st Battalion were recommitted to the fight on the morning of 20 June. Lt. Colonel Talbott's doughs had the mission of striking north from Bokod at dawn and securing Daklan Airstrip some 3,800 yards away. "The Ripper" hoped that acquisition of the strip would permit aerial evacuation of all future casualties.

Charley Company, under a new commander, Lt. Joseph J. Kutys, and Able Company, led by Capt. Alfred P. Massoud, were detailed to attack astride a hilly trail running on a north-south line. Lt. Russell A. Campobello's Company B was to parallel the advance several hundred yards off to the right. The enemy fought a superb delaying action in an attempt to save Daklan. He was again his old incensed self; nothing like the meek Nips who abandoned their guns to charge after American rations. As A and C Companies rounded each bend in the trail they were met with streams of point-blank machine-gun fire. Casualties were sustained as the Nip refused to back up.

Like all others in Luzon, these trail skirmishes were up-hill fights. But now the Jap was ripe to be taken from either side. He had neither men nor guns for all-around defense of his trailblocks. Slowly A and C doughs worked in from the flanks and knocked out each of the blocks. The resistance ended as abruptly as it began when a Company C platoon overran a machine-gun nest and suddenly found itself on the high point of the trail. Directly below lay Daklan and the airstrip, peacefully nestling in an emerald-green, saucer-shaped valley. The picture held the silent serenity of a Sunday afternoon on Beacon Street. Baker Company turned off onto the southern rim of the bowl while Able and Charley deployed into wide skirmish lines prior to sweeping across the valley. Not a shot was fired as the battalion completed its search of airstrip and farmland.

Although it was not known at the time, Daklan was to be the 130th's final combat objective. Yet it was here that they came closest to losing their regimental commander. Colonel Collins came within an ace of having an airstrip for his tomb.

En route to Daklan behind the 1st Battalion, the regimental command group received a message from General Clarkson directing that Colonel Collins report to the Division CP immediately. When "The Ripper" got the message, he decided to continue on to Daklan, call for a Cub to land on the strip and then fly back for his conference with the Golden Cross commander. This way, the entire trip would take only a few minutes compared to the two-day march which was necessary if he chose to return by way of Ambuclao. Lieutenant Brisely, patrolling overhead, was ordered to come down and pick up the colonel. The pilot countered with the request that someone first check the strip for firmness.

Colonel Collins left his party at the edge of the field and walked out to the landing area alone. For several minutes he stamped up and down the area looking for loose spots or holes. When none were discerned he called across to his radio operator to notify Brisely that the strip appeared safe. No sooner were the words "come on in" transmitted to the Cub than two Jap machine guns dug in on the slopes of the valley centered heavy fires on the strip. "The Ripper"—lone man on the strip—quickly hit the dirt as bullets churned up the turf a couple of yards away. Brisely, already hovering a few feet above the field, gunned his ship and climbed off into the sky. CP personnel ducked into a small ditch running the length of the field.

The colonel slowly turned his body until he faced the ditch. Then he crawled through the fires toward this scant cover. As he tumbled

to temporary safety a mud-covered, grinning doughboy slyly inquired: "Tell me, Colonel, how was it out there?" Colonel Collins glanced at his companion in the ditch and muttered, "Brother, sometimes a fellow feels as big as an elephant."

It wasn't until noon of the next day that the machine guns were located and knocked out of action. From 21 to 25 June the 1st and 2d Battalions operated long-range combat patrols around Daklan in a systematic search for stragglers who had evaded the columns as they marched on the airstrip. Opposition was nil. Ninety-one Nips were killed and two captured during this three-day period. The 130th suffered a few wounded. On 25 June the Division's mission was completed when a platoon from Company B, led by Lt. Robert H. McCauley, contacted a 6th Division company between Bokod and Kayapa.

Good news greeted Colonel Collins when he arrived at General Clarkson's headquarters. Effective 30 June the entire Division was to be taken off an operational status. On 26 June the 1st Battalion moved back to Ambuclao. Lt. Colonel Faulconer's unit followed a day later. By this time the Bokod road was open from its branch-off point on Mountain Trail to Ambuclao. Trucks were waiting at Ambuclao to carry the battalions back to Baguio. Every unit in the Division was in a summer capital rest camp by 30 June.

War in Northern Luzon was over for the Golden Cross. Question Mark, Aringay, Bauang, Pugo, Galiano, Asin, Kennon Road, Skyline Ridge, and a thousand-and-one assorted hills slipped into the limbo of the past. Bigger things were on the Division agenda. North of the Philippines lay Japan, last stop on the road back.

## Chapter 17: Rest for the Weary

A THRILLING touch to the liberation of Baguio was added on 29 April when the American and Philippine flags were raised side by side over the gaunt city. Once at the peak they were lowered to half-staff in honor of the late President Roosevelt. Contingents of troops from the 33d and 37th Divisions, headed by their respective commanders, served as guards of honor during the ceremony. Few on the scene realized it, but it was no commonplace American standard that was hoisted on high in the chill morning air. This flag had a history as exciting as the actual Battle for Baguio.

Once before this same flag had occupied this same spot. When the United States went to war against Japan in 1941 it waved over Baguio, remaining aloft until enemy entry into the summer capital appeared imminent. Only then did its aged caretaker, sixty-year-old Juan Arellano, permit it to be lowered. Silver-haired Arellano knew that the victorious Japanese would sully and humiliate the colors as they later did the standards that marked Bataan and Corregidor. The slight, stooped Filipino carefully folded the flag, took it to his home and had his wife sew it inside a pillow.

For three years the colors reposed inside this pillow. On two occasions the Nips raided Arellano's house in search of the flag but courageous Juan braved beatings and threats of death to keep his secret.

Finally, in February 1945 American bombers began to crumble Baguio and Arellano knew that he would not have long to wait before delivering the flag to its rightful owners. In the wake of one bombardment he gathered his family and slipped through the ring of Nip sentries posted around the city. For days the Arellano family slogged over the Caraballos subsisting on *camotes* and water. Eventually they reached American forces, stumbling into the 123d Infantry line in the Rosario sector. Here, Counterintelligence Corps personnel met them and turned them over to the local Phillippine Civil Affairs Unit (PCAU).

But before famished and exhausted Arellano would eat, he pleaded to be taken to "see commanding officer." Impressed by Juan's courage and humility, PCAU officers escorted him to General Clarkson's CP. Once in the company of the Division Commander, Arellano extracted the flag from its place of concealment, still as bright and clean as when it had added color to Baguio's holiday festivals. "It is my fervent desire," he said as he pressed the standard into General Clarkson's hands, "that your troops let this be the first American flag to fly over liberated Baguio. I am sure that my countrymen join me in this wish."



*VE-day was celebrated at the Baguio Country Club, the Division CP*

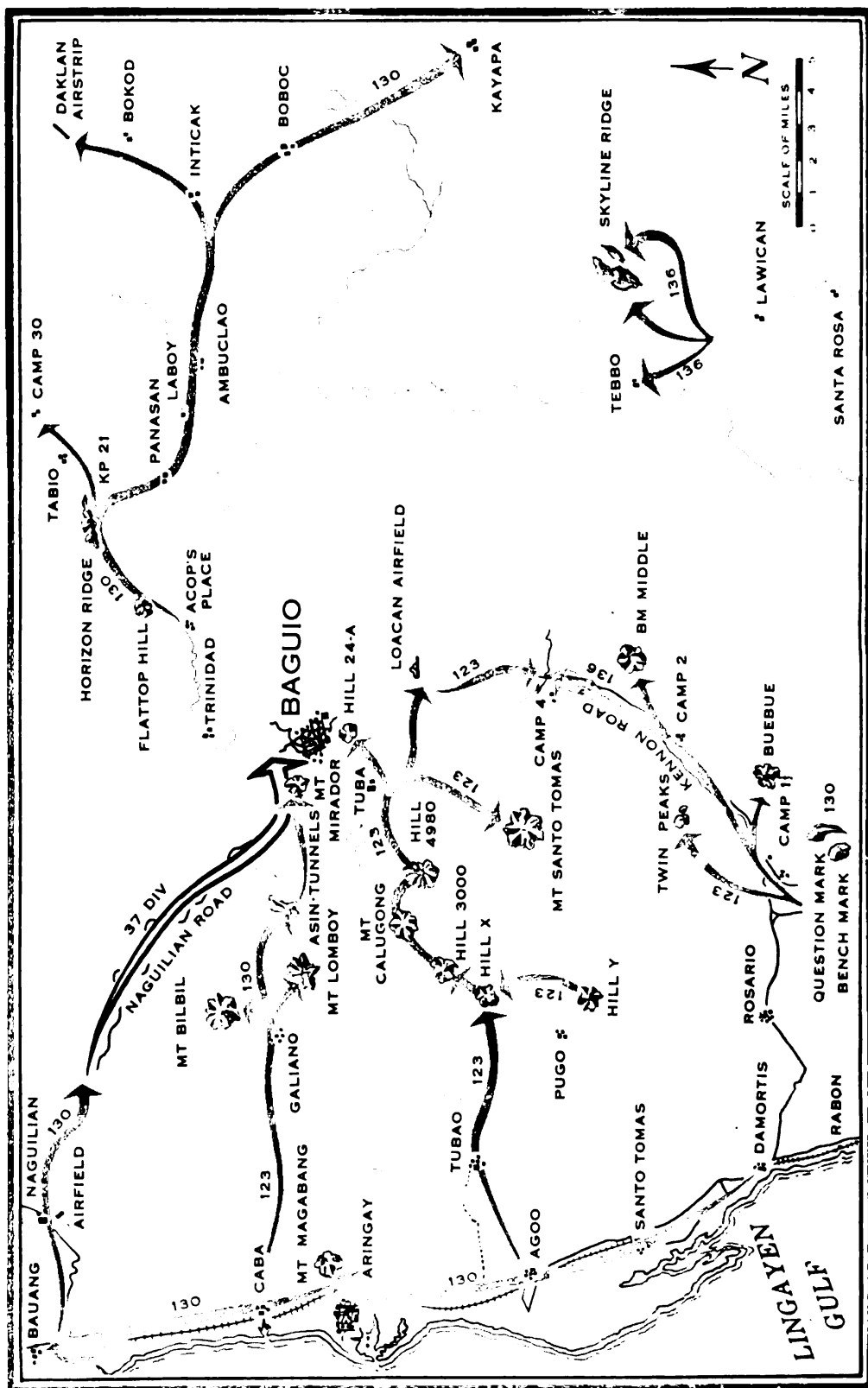
Grateful citizens of Baguio later presented these colors to General Clarkson as a token of their appreciation for the Division's fight to free the summer capital.

Baguio underwent a rapid metamorphosis in which it was transformed from an idle mass of wreckage into a bustling rear-echelon base charged with servicing combat elements still active in the surrounding mountains. Roads became congested with quartermaster trucks hauling supply and impedimenta dumps from Pugo, Aringay and Bauang to locations within the city limits. General Clarkson's CP was moved inland from the coast and installed in the palatial Baguio Country Club, a rambling, ranch-style building which once served as a gathering place for Philippine élite.

It was the Division Commander's desire to make Baguio a sumptuous rest center where tired infantry forces could relax in the tingling, rarefied climate and gradually shake off the fatigue induced by three months of mountain warfare. Furthermore, General Clarkson wanted his infantrymen to sink into Baguio's comparative luxury without first sweating through the irksome details of latrine excavation and camp construction. Immaculately furnished tents and well policed areas were to greet the doughboys as they came out of line.

Golden Cross engineers gave this program a healthy forward push by repairing an abandoned sawmill in Camp John Hay and restoring it to full production capacity. In a matter of days thousands of board feet of lumber were made available. Filipino work gangs, furnished by PCAU, performed the actual construction jobs. Labor on these





Map 27: The Battle for Baguio

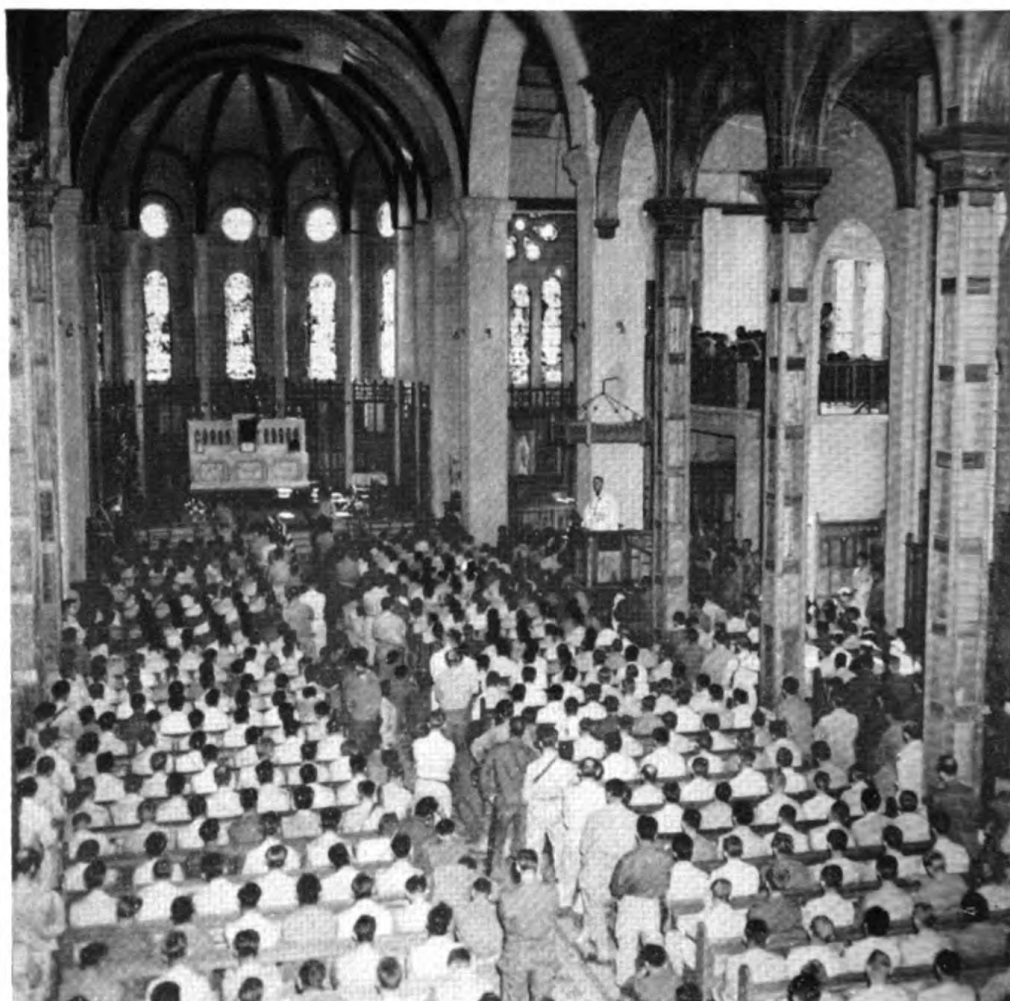


*Division Special Services center in Baguio*

projects was completed by 15 May when the first units of the 136th Infantry arrived in the summer capital after five weeks on Skyline Ridge.

Special Services operations kept abreast of the improved food and housing conditions by expanding to a unprecedented degree. A Division recreation center was set up in the shell fragment-scarred ruins of the old post exchange building in Camp John Hay. Under the supervision of Capt. Eugene M. Gilroy, Division SSO, the ramshackle premises were completely renovated and equipped with modern athletic and recreation appurtenances. Spacious lounging rooms, outfitted with upholstered sofas and chairs were made available to troops desiring nothing more than to laze around and escape military routine. For the more athletically inclined, the center had a gymnasium, badminton courts, billiards and ping-pong tables and bowling alleys.

Baguio took on the appearance of a carnival midway after sundown. Each battalion in the Division had its own hard liquor bar where *Paniqui* whiskies and rum were sold to the troops at a nominal charge. All beverages dispensed here were first tested by medical officers for purity and alcoholic content. Enterprising Filipinos furnished competition in the form of numerous *basi* (Philippine wine) houses scattered throughout the city. A principal meeting place for troops seeking after-dark diversion was the Division Special Services center. In addition to its sports facilities, the center offered a continual round of dances, movies and USO shows. Another congested night spot was the Pines Theater in the heart of the summer capital. Now operated by the Division, it once was the most lavishly decorated movie house in the Philippines.



*Interior of the cathedral in Baguio*

## II

Members of the Division used this recuperation period to gain a more comprehensive knowledge of the Philippine people. Prior association with the native population had been limited to the peasants who served so nobly as food and ammunition carriers. But in Baguio the men of the 33d encountered a new type Filipino: one so completely Westernized that his culture and educational standards compared with those of the United States. Off-duty mingling with these people made the doughboy understand the tremendous sacrifices made by the Filipinos in support of the American war effort. Most had given sons and brothers in the fighting on Bataan and Corregidor; many lost their personal fortunes and holdings during the years of occupation for their refusal to abet "The Greater East Asia Co-prosperity Sphere."

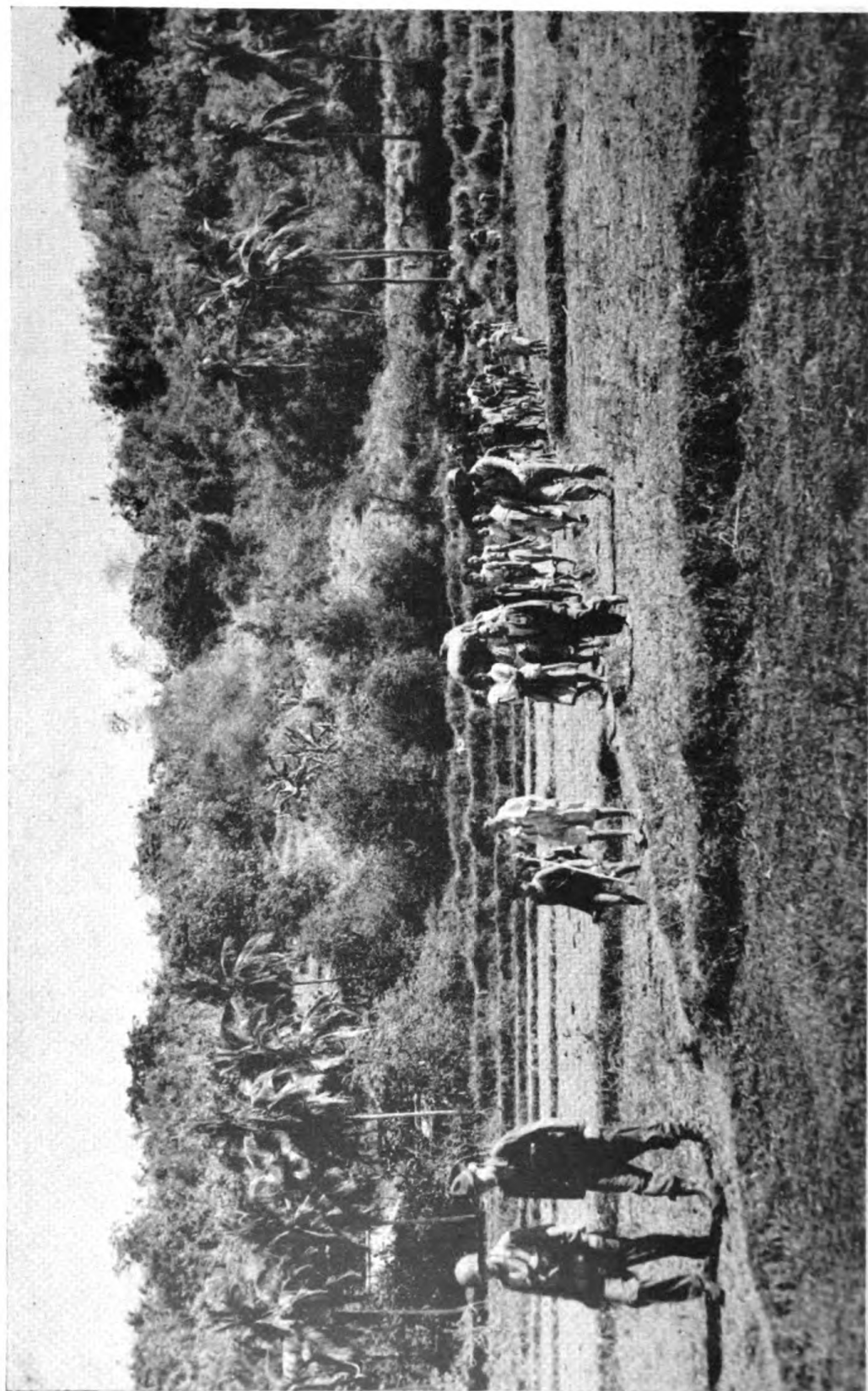
On the other extreme, the Baguio area also housed the stolid, near-

primitive Igorots, mountain tribesmen who dressed in centuries-old fashion and tilled their small farms with crude implements. Stumpy and uncommunicative, the Igorots were one of the last Philippine sects to accede to modern government. But despite their outward stoicism these dark-skinned mountaineers proved great assets to the Division throughout the Battle for Baguio.

Principal achievement of the Igorots was their role in the safe evacuation of twelve thousand civilian refugees from the Baguio area during the middle stages of the Northern Luzon campaign. In early March, when the summer capital was being subjected to daily air strikes, Division learned of the sorry plight of the city's civilian population. Most of them Americans and Allied nationals, they had been forced to flee their homes and take refuge in the surrounding hills because of the incessant pounding from the skies. Division resolved to aid these sick and hungry people.

Out of this decision came the famous "Refugee Trail," a literal life line for civilians. Division G-2, in search of the most effective method of evacuation, asked Igorots if American patrols would be able to meet groups of refugees at pre-determined points near Baguio and guide them to safety without enemy interference. The tribesmen recommended against this measure, claiming that the Japanese maintained a close surveillance of the Baguio area and would be able to discern the operation. However, they volunteered to guide the refugees through the mountains themselves since Igorot activity around the Nips would arouse little suspicion. Subsequently, two Counterintelligence Corps agents, Sgts. James Lindquist and Estil Petty, members of the 33d CIC Detachment, went out on patrol with four Igorots to survey the trails around Baguio and note the possibility of coming through with large numbers of evacuéés.

Lindquist and Petty recommended to G-2 that rescue operations be placed in the hands of the willing Igorots. Their boundless endurance and familiarity with the ground qualified them above American forces. Operation "Refugee Trail" went into effect immediately. Eight tribesmen left CIC headquarters in Tubao in mid-March and slipped into Baguio to spread the word that evacuation plans were under way. Proceeding cautiously, the Igorots first set up a central assembly point for refugees in a wooded area south of the Naguilian Road near Irisan. Scores of civilians petitioned the Japanese for passes to leave Baguio, ostensibly for the purpose of searching for *camotes* and other foods. Once outside the enemy net, they proceeded to the assembly point where they contacted additional Igorot guides.



Thousands of civilians escaped from Baguio by way of "Refugee Trail." Here a group comes out of the foothills into Tubao.

Innumerable hardships befell these people during their flight for safety. Weakened because of poor diet, many had to be carried over the hills by their guides. Some could not survive the rigors of constant marching and died by the wayside. It usually took seven or eight days of steady plodding to negotiate the full distance of the "Refugee Trail."

It did not take the enemy long to learn that large numbers of civilians were being evacuated to American lines. But the Jap did little to halt this activity, probably because of the scarcity of food in Baguio. He occasionally intercepted parties and stripped them of all valuables. Mostly, however, the enemy countered CIC activity by telling people in the summer capital that American authorities were conducting death courts at Tubao where anyone suspected of connection with the Nips was summarily executed. Despite this propaganda, evacuation facilities were enlarged and subsidiary trails were opened leading down Kennor Road and from Antamok south to San Nicolas.

Word was received at Tubao on 5 April that Brig. Gen. Manuel Roxas—later President of the Philippines Commonwealth—and a party of cabinet ministers were ready to break out of Baguio. A trusted Igorot was given a note to General Roxas outlining the plan for his escape. Roxas sent back the message that he was under constant guard by the Japanese military police and could not leave until the sentries were removed. A week later Roxas notified CIC that the path was clear, but by the time Igorot guides reached him, he was again under surveillance.

Finally, after a seven-day delay, Roxas dispatched information to CIC that he was free to start down from the summer capital. Sergeant Lindquist and a score of Igorot guides left Tubao upon receipt of this information, aiming to pick up the Roxas party before it was sighted by the enemy. Lindquist had several close calls with Japanese patrols but managed to make contact with General Roxas a few miles west of Baguio. Included in the Roxas party were Filomena Osmeña, daughter of President Serge Osmeña; Jose Yolo, Chief Justice of the Supreme Court; Antonio de las Alas, Minister of Finance; and Teófilo Sison, Minister of the Interior. Yolo, de las Alas and Sison held these offices in the Jap-dominated puppet Philippine government. Sison was interned and later convicted of high treason by a People's Court.

### III

As soon as the Division line advanced past Baguio, Golden Cross civil affairs personnel assumed the task of restoring a city of 30,000 persons to normal operation. Critical problems had to be resolved in





*General Roxas is greeted by General Clarkson as he reaches the safety of American lines. Throughout the war Roxas was detained in Baguio as a prisoner of the Japanese.*

a minimum of time. Multitudes were homeless. Commercial establishments had been bombed out and mass unemployment was rife. Utilities could not function and the threat of epidemic hung over the summer capital. Food was scarce; hundreds who could not afford fantastic black-market prices were slowly starving to death. No medical facilities were available to Baguio's civilian bombing casualties.

Major Eli J. Paris, a successful Philadelphia business executive before

the war, was selected by General Clarkson to serve as Baguio's civil affairs administrator. Noting the need for prompt corrective measures, Major Paris took immediate steps to curb the chaotic conditions prevalent within the city. His first act was to provide shelter for the large numbers of homeless. Huge tent camps were erected where civilians were given emergency medical treatment and Army field rations. During the day hundreds of them left the camp areas to work on reconstruction of their bombed-out residences.

PCAU 7, commanded by Lt. Col. E. E. Hobson, entered Baguio shortly after its liberation. Working in conjunction with Major Paris's office, PCAU opened stores all over the town where Army rations and captured Japanese foodstuffs were sold across the counter at token prices. In addition to succoring Baguio's hungry population, this procedure did much to stifle black-market operations. Employment offices were established where Filipinos could apply for work with the Golden Cross as road and camp builders or as carriers of matériel for forward infantrymen. Pay rates ran between two and three pesos per day for this labor.

Large strides toward recovery were made once civil affairs units untangled the skeins of disorder and restored a semblance of organization to Baguio. Much sickness and insanitation were curbed when Division engineers repaired water purification plants. Reconditioned electric power installations permitted the residents of the summer capital to labor beyond daylight hours and employ electrically operated tools in rebuilding homes and businesses. Another major Golden Cross contribution to the welfare of the Filipinos was a 500-bed municipal hospital, equipped with Army medical supplies.

When civil affairs' corrective measures began to bear fruit, Major Paris made the recommendation that all phases of city government be turned back to the Filipinos. Division was to remain on the scene in an advisory capacity. Accordingly, Baguio's last mayor prior to Japanese occupation, Vicsio Valderassa, was reappointed to office. Valderassa had stubbornly opposed the enemy throughout the war and commanded the respect of the entire population. For administrative assistants he selected men who also refused to swear allegiance to Nippon. By the end of the Division's stay in Baguio, local residents had become self-reliant to a large extent.

#### IV

Little training was done by infantry elements in Baguio. Replacements came in from depots at Manila and these men went through a

full work day. For the veterans, however, the military itinerary was confined to housekeeping, calisthenics, occasional close-order drill and parades for the purpose of awarding decorations. A few officers and noncoms were detailed to help train young, green Filipinos who had come to Baguio to enlist in the Philippine Army. For the most part though, everyone, save the troops still tactically employed, relaxed and enjoyed life.

Decorations ceremonies in the summer capital vastly differed from the ones staged during the Battle for Baguio. Here, a man's entire battalion was turned out to witness the affair and pass in review before him as he stood beside the Division Commander. During the fighting the method of presentation was far more informal, and according to recipients, far more satisfying. General Clarkson habitually called in at G-1 prior to his daily tour of the infantry battalions to procure the names of the doughboys approved for combat awards. With his pockets stuffed with Silver and Bronze Stars, the General visited the various battalion CPs where he requested to see the men.

Upon their arrival at the CP these bearded, exhausted figures were surprised to see General Clarkson saunter forward, introduce himself and strike up an easy conversation. In the course of these discussions, the Division CG would reach into his pocket, extract a Silver or Bronze Star and pin it on a muddy fatigue jacket. Haggard and tired as most of them were, their eyes could still light up in appreciation of their commander's considerate gesture.

It was the same with field commissions. No coldly worded Sixth Army order notified a 33d Division man that he had been raised from the ranks. He discovered it when General Clarkson came up to his forward position and pinned the gold bar on his collar. Acts like these made Golden Cross infantrymen think of their commander not only as a leader but as a comrade.

In one case, when S/Sgt. Lee A. Singer, Company C, 123d Infantry, was tendered a battlefield appointment, General Clarkson found him standing in a mess line with the rest of his unit at a Pugo rest camp. This unglamorous setting did not deter the Division Commander. Crashing the line, he made an impromptu presentation to Sergeant Singer who stood with a messgear dangling from his hand, canteen cup hooked over his belt and a wide grin across his bearded face. This human touch of the General's did not go unrecognized. Both Singer and his commander received a roar of approval that echoed throughout the camp.

Coincident with the relief of the Division from combat came an order from Corps directing the 127th RCT of the 32d Division to relieve the Golden Cross in the Baguio area. The 33d was told to move to the beaches in the Caba-Aringay-Bauang area, set up camps, and commence amphibious training for the projected fall assault on Japan. Movement to the coast began on 28 June when the 123d Infantry—less its 1st Battalion which had not yet returned from Cervantes—struck its summer capital camp and occupied a new site near Bauang. By 11 July the last Division unit had complied with the transfer order.

For the supporting elements of the 33d Baguio had been an idyllic vacation ground and they were loath to quit the cool mountain resort for the humidity of South China Sea shores. Particularly chagrined, however, was the 130th Infantry. None of the regiments experienced a lengthy stay in the summer capital, but the Blackhawks only profited to the extent of eight days which came after their relief on Mountain Trail. And most of this period was spent preparing for the move to amphibious training locations.

A short rehabilitation period prior to the commencement of training was decreed by General Clarkson so that all units in the Division could develop their camps and still receive an adequate rest from the rigors of the campaign. While not possessing Baguio's breath-taking scenery, Division camps were nevertheless made unusually attractive. All boasted nicely furnished recreation halls woven of bamboo strips and thatched by Filipino laborers. Kitchens and messhalls were constructed in the same fashion and the men were able to eat their meals in comfortable surroundings.

During the pre-training phase many members of the command were permitted to take lengthy leaves. Most prized of these, naturally, were the forty-five days of temporary duty in the United States given to a small group of high-point men. Larger numbers of troops were furloughed to Manila for one-week periods where the Golden Cross maintained a leave camp at Grace Park. Manila proved a distinct disappointment to the majority of Golden Cross visitors. The onetime Pearl of the Orient retained not a vestige of the glitter for which it was famous. Shockingly torn up, it offered just intense heat, poor accommodations, thousands of base-section GIs and cheap liquor at ridiculous prices.

As in Baguio, Captain Gilroy's Special Services office did much to liven up the Division's existence. Softball and volleyball leagues were organized which carried through until a Division champion in each sport was named. Top flight entertainers currently on USO tours were





*Thousands of men stood in the rain to watch the Kay Kyser show at Bauang*

booked for appearances in the vast Golden Cross theater at Bauang. Among those giving performances were Kay Kyser and Gracie Fields, the world-acclaimed English comedienne. Kyser's show proved how American troops hungered for entertainment smacking of Stateside. Almost five thousand men, the majority standees, braved a tropical rainstorm to take in the Old Professor's antics.

Once training began, General Clarkson gave his command the whys and wherefores of the coming operation. In characteristic fashion he visited each battalion to give his orientation. Everyone knew that Japan came next, but few were prepared to receive the news handed down by the General: The 33d Division was going in first. Where? He could not say. When? Sometime in the fall.

No further message was needed to stress the importance of interim training. If Philippine fighting was maddening, what could one look forward to in Japan?

First training priority went to amphibious work. Instead of the usual battalion-size exercises, Division units were trained by regimental combat teams. There was no shortage of transports or landing craft as had been the case in Hawaii and New Guinea. Higher headquarters gave the 33d everything it needed in the way of instructors and equipment. Excellent landing beaches lined the shore of the South China Sea from Bauang south to Aringay.

Colonel Caveness's 136th Infantry, based at Bauang, was the first RCT to take amphibious training. The Bearcats began toward the end of July and finished in early August. However, the other RCTs were not idle while they awaited their turn to take to the water. Their errors in the Luzon campaign were constantly reviewed. Everyone went back to the old grind of scouting and patrolling, reduction of pill-boxes, the squad in the attack and perimeter defense. Particular attention was paid the hundreds of replacements who flowed into the Golden Cross ranks throughout June and July. They had to be taught from the ground up.

Two key command changes occurred while the Division was in the lowlands. General Myers, Assistant Division Commander since Camp Forrest days, was given command of the 40th Division which had landed on Luzon on D-day. His successor was Col. Winfred G. Skelton, former CO of the 149th Infantry Regiment, 38th Division. Colonel Skelton was promoted to brigadier general a short time after joining the 33d. General Paxton, Divarty commander, left the Golden Cross for a States assignment a few days following General Myers' transfer. Serving in his stead was Col. Kenneth S. Sweany, ex-Chief



of Staff of the 41st Division and a veteran of forty-two months of overseas service.

Division headquarters resembled the New York Stock Exchange in activity during the amphibious training period. Work went on from 0800 until well past midnight. General Clarkson was in constant conference with his planning chief, Colonel McAnsh, and his staff section heads. Senior officers labored tirelessly and drove their subordinates in order to compile the sheaves of orders and annexes necessary to an operation of such magnitude. Recently promoted Lt. Colonel Paris handled personnel problems; Lt. Colonel Downey, G-2 since the beginning of the Luzon fight, headed the intelligence section. In charge of the plans and operations group was Lt. Colonel Faulconer of the 130th Infantry, temporarily replacing Colonel Sackton, on leave in Chicago. Major Thomas F. Smart served as G-4.

## VI

On 6 August an American B-29 Superfortress dropped an atomic bomb on Hiroshima. That same day President Truman broadcast from Washington describing the explosive force of the bomb. He called on Japan for immediate capitulation, adding that if enemy leaders refused American terms "they may expect a rain of death from the air, the like of which has never been seen on earth." Unrestrained joy greeted the news of the bomb. Almost everyone felt that the roar of the Hiroshima explosion was the death knell of the Japanese Empire.

Added impetus was given this upsurge of emotion two days later when Russia formally declared war against the enemy. Twenty-four hours after this event another Nip city was atom-bombed, this time Nagasaki. While the Division tensely awaited Japan's answer to Russia and the bomb, no deviation from the training schedule was permitted. The 130th Infantry was actually afloat on APAs during this period while other infantry units attacked mock-up Nipponese positions in their training areas. No let-up in planning was discernible at headquarters where an around-the-clock shift was still maintained.

At 0745 Eastern War Time, 10 August, the official Japanese Domei News Agency broadcast an announcement that the Government of Japan would accept the surrender terms laid down in the Potsdam Declaration provided the sovereignty of the Emperor went unquestioned. The text of the message delivered to the United States through the neutral Swiss Government read as follows:

In obedience to the gracious command of His Majesty the Emperor, who, ever anxious to enhance the cause of world peace, desires earnestly to bring about an early termination of hostilities with a view to saving mankind from the calamities to be imposed upon them by further continuation of the war, the Japanese Government asked several weeks ago the Soviet Government, with which neutral relations then prevailed, to render good offices in restoring peace *vis-a-vis* the enemy powers. Unfortunately these efforts in the interest of peace having failed, the Japanese Government in conformity with the august wish of His Majesty to restore the general peace and desiring to put an end to the untold sufferings entailed by war as quickly as possible have decided upon the following:

The Japanese Government are ready to accept the terms enumerated in the joint declaration which was issued at Potsdam on July 26, 1945 by the heads of the Government of the United States, Great Britain and China and later subscribed to by the Soviet Government, with the understanding that the said declaration does not comprise any demand which prejudices the prerogatives of His Majesty as a sovereign ruler.

The Japanese Government hope sincerely that this understanding is warranted and desire keenly that an explicit indication to that effect will be speedily forthcoming.

Secretary of State James F. Byrnes, speaking for the Allied nations, responded on 11 August with a message informing the Japanese that the surrender would have to be unconditional in every respect. At 1900, 14 August, the enemy accepted Allied terms.

The war was over.

VJ-day officially fell on 2 September 1945 when General MacArthur and Jap Foreign Minister Magoru Shigemitsu signed the instrument of surrender aboard the battleship *Missouri*, riding at anchor in Tokyo Bay. A day later a similar ceremony took place in Baguio where Yamashita surrendered all Imperial Japanese land, sea and air forces in the Philippines to Maj. Gen. Edmond Leavey, representing General MacArthur. Facing the Japs across the table were Lt. Gen. Jonathan M. Wainwright and Lt. Gen. Arthur Percival, British commander at Singapore in 1942.

With the surrender, a plan supplementing Operation Olympic was drawn up to cover the expected early move from the Philippines and the first phases of the Japanese occupation. Known as Operation Blacklist, it did not entirely supplant Olympic. On the contrary, Olympic was simply held in a state of suspension pending firm establishment of American forces in the Nip homeland. Olympic was to have been implemented on 1 November when the Sixth Army, composed of four Army and one Marine corps, was scheduled to invade Kyushu, southernmost of the five islands comprising Japan.



*On 3 September 1945 General Yamashita capitulated in Baguio. Facing him across the table (left to right) are Lieutenant General Jonathan M. Wainwright, Lieutenant General Wilhelm*





*D. Styer, Major General Edmond Leavey, British Lieutenant General Sir Arthur Percival, Brigadier General B. M. Fitch, and Major General Robert S. Beightler.*

I Corps had been given the mission of carrying the initial assault. IX Corps and the V Marine Amphibious Corps were due to beach at Ariaka Wan and Kagoshima, respectively, a few minutes after the I Corps landing. XI Corps formed the Army reserve. Before reverting to reserve, however, this force was to make a D-day feint at Shikoku, in an attempt to suck enemy air, naval and ground strength away from Kyushu.

General Swift's divisions had the town of Miyazaki, on the east coast of the island, as their landing area. The 33d and 25th Divisions were to go in first, abreast, while the 41st Division was to be held in reserve. Golden Cross landing plans had the 130th and 136th Infantry Regiments hitting the beach as assault troops with the 123d in floating reserve, prepared to land on call. Colonel Collins' men, beaching to the right of the 136th, had a particularly unenviable job. Not only would they form the right flank of the Division, but they would do the same for both Corps and Army.

Four fresh enemy divisions manned the Miyazaki beaches according to Division G-2 reports. Favored by a series of hills that would have afforded them excellent defilade from American air and naval strikes, the enemy was in a position to fiercely resist any amphibious assault. No one doubted that Operation Olympic would have proven a bloody undertaking for the Golden Cross. Preparations for the move to Japan were made with a minimum of complaint. Even the most homesick were willing to take added months of overseas service now that they were to land as conquerors instead of invaders. Home was a matter of time, not of luck, at this point.

## Chapter 18: Partners in Battle

IN EVERY combat operation undertaken by the 33d Division as a whole or by any part of it, plans were based primarily on the use of its infantry; other Golden Cross arms and services supporting. There can be no question that these elements played a vital part in the New Guinea, Morotai and Northern Luzon combat successes. While it is conceivable that in some minor operations the infantry was not dependent upon supporting units, in most instances there would have been little chance of victory without the employment of all Division facilities.

### 108TH ENGINEER COMBAT BATTALION

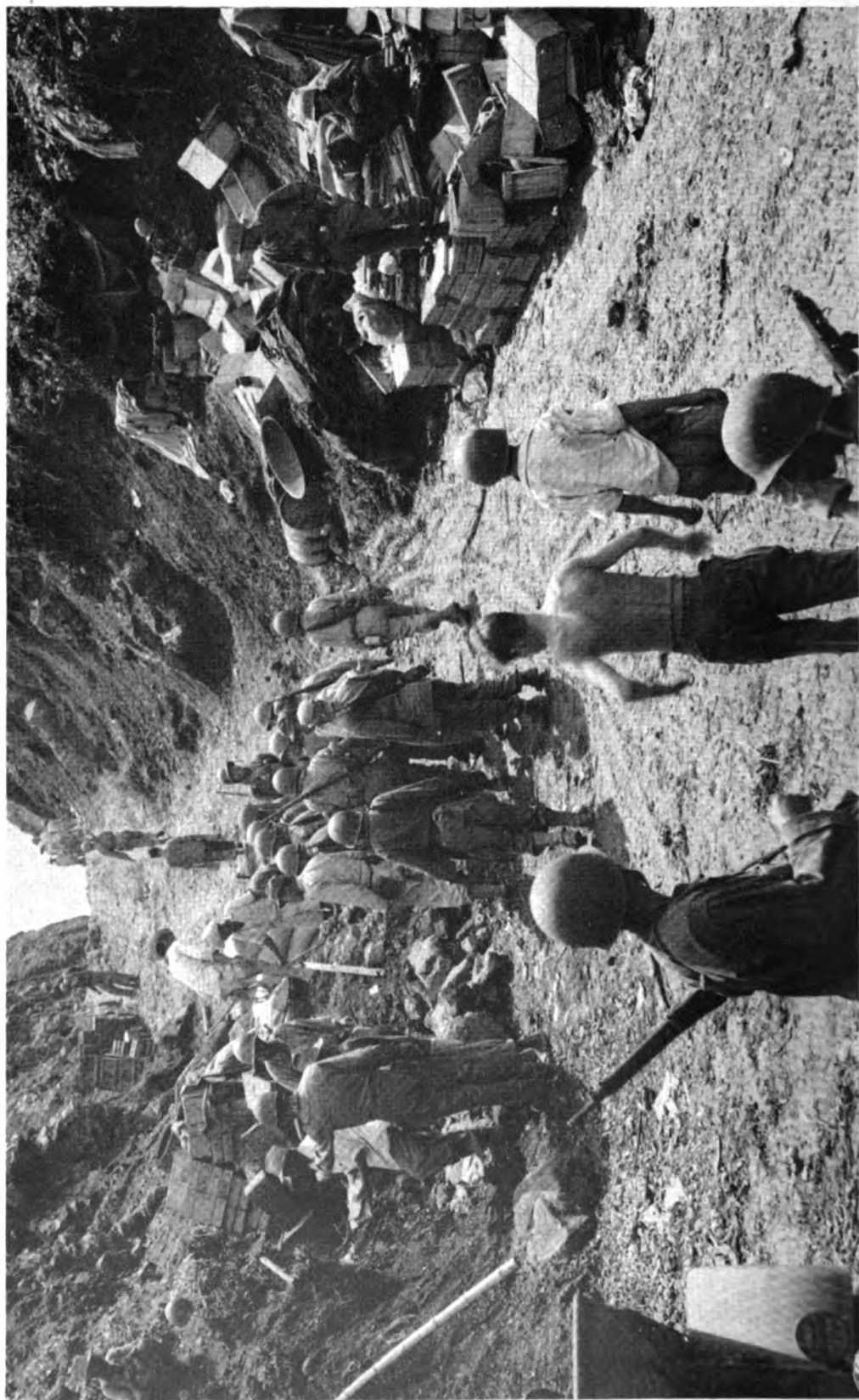
When the late Gen. Joseph W. Stilwell visited the Division in June 1945 during the mop-up along the Mountain Trail, he carefully surveyed the rugged, mountainous terrain marking the approaches to Tabio. Turning to General Clarkson, the then Army Ground Forces chief remarked that the steep hill masses constituted ground "worse than Burma." To the infantrymen up front who had viewed greater and lesser forms of the Northern Luzon scene since mid-February, the grizzled veteran of the China-Burma-India Theater was guilty of a gross understatement. He amended General Stilwell's remark to read "worse than anywhere."

Because of the enormous barriers created by the wild Caraballos, supplying forward units with necessities of war became the Division's paramount logistical problem. Discounting the ever-present need for ammunition, the infantryman still required a thousand and one other items to help him strip the enemy from his mountain retreat. Moving these tools of combat up to the spearheads was a war in itself. Road-building turned out to be the major campaign.

It took every vestige of fortitude, privation and self-sacrifice in the 108th Engineer Combat Battalion to force open lines of supply to the Infantry. Starting at Question Mark Hill where the engineers built a supply road rising eight hundred feet in a distance of two miles, their support contributed much to the outcome of the battle for Baguio. In the Question Mark fight Lt. Colonel Kane's troops did more than construct roads. Engineer parties hand-carried water to front-line infantrymen during the heat of battle and evacuated casualties under Japanese fire.

Later in the campaign when the drive toward the summer capital was first beginning to gain momentum, Golden Cross engineers, with a party of infantry, opened the key to the Agoo-Tubao road, permitting





Engineer road-building ingenuity kept supplies flowing to infantry units atop Hill 3000

two battalions of the 123d Infantry to pour through and envelop Hill X. On this mission they rebuilt and replaced several demolished bridges, fighting their way from one structure to the next. On occasion this detachment actually operated in front of the infantrymen, particularly a mine-sweeping team which probed the shoulders of the road. While this team worked forward, Jap machine gunners and mortarmen harassed it from positions on the steep ridges overlooking the pass.

Next came the spectacular end run by the 130th Infantry. Again engineer support proved a vital factor in this successful operation. Baker Company engineers, grouped with a reconnaissance detachment out of battalion headquarters, pulled off one of the greatest coups of the Luzon campaign during the height of the flanking drive. While Colonel Collins' men swarmed into Bauang from the left side, the engineers advanced across the key Bauang bridge, disarming demolitions which could have reduced the structure to wreckage. Seizure of this bridge intact was a significant development in the fight for Baguio. It prevented a hitch in the 130th's supply line and enabled the regiment to race on to Naguilian before higher headquarters flagged it down.

When the 123d was sent through the mountains from Pugo to Baguio as one prong of the attack on the city, the engineers literally built the path over which the infantry travelled. Corps called the advance northeast from Pugo "impossible" due to the wild country, but the 108th Engineers put in a supply road over eight miles of this tortuous terrain. In some places the road rose as high as 4,400 feet above sea level. After the Japanese surrender, a member of Yamashita's staff called the Pugo-Baguio thrust the turning point of the Northern Luzon fight. He claimed that the erstwhile "Tiger of Malaya" never expected an attack along such a line, assuming that difficulties of supply would force even the most courageous units to turn back.

Engineers set examples of heroism which favorably compared with those of the infantry. Throughout the Philippine fighting they cleared fourteen major minefields, disposing of 234 individual mines. One of the largest of these was located on Kennon Road, just north of Camp Three. Riflemen from the 136th were all but stopped here until members of Charley Company, 108th Engineers, commanded by Capt. Frederick J. Lund, walked out ahead and disarmed the mines. In the course of this activity Lund's troops were heavily shelled by enemy artillery firing at close range.

Other engineer accomplishments include the installation of eleven airstrips for artillery liaison planes; construction of 57.9 miles of



*A bulldozer fills in a blown-out section of Mountain Trail*

mountain roadway; maintenance of 165 miles of roads in Division hands at the time it was relieved from combat; construction and maintenance of twenty-two water points which yielded almost four million gallons for Division consumption; construction of twenty-five bridges, five of which were the Bailey type; repair of fifteen additional bridges, and the construction of thirty-five bypasses.

For its superb performance of duty in Northern Luzon the 108th Engineer Combat Battalion was awarded the Distinguished Unit Citation by the War Department.

#### DIVISION ARTILLERY

"Your artillery follows us like flies. We can run, we can dig, we can hide, we can answer with the fires of our own guns but still your shells fall upon us like the rain. From the beginning we knew that we

could never match the American artillery in meting out destruction." This amazing statement—amazing because until the last days of the battle for Baguio the enemy kept his field pieces on high ground and never lacked for compensating targets—was made by a Japanese prisoner taken at Asin.

At one time or another every infantryman in the 33d Division had given heartfelt thanks for the presence of Golden Cross 105s and 155s. But as a tribute, this simple statement tops the countless laudatory phrases and letters of commendation conferred upon the redlegs for their work in the Philippines.

Since 5 March 1941, when the Division was brought into federal service, the infantry elements had witnessed numerous demonstrations of raw artillery power. During the training phase troop commanders continually stressed the importance of artillery as it affected the dough-boy. But the foot soldier reserved decision. He had to see it in action before committing himself. He had to see whether it would lessen his dirty job. He received his first orientation on Luzon in February 1945.

Bloody Question Mark Hill had been stalemated for two days before massed artillery fires were brought to bear on the crest. Infantrymen had taken a merciless beating from the entrenched Japanese; they had sustained more than a hundred casualties, with thirty-two killed in action. Artillery represented their sole salvation. Three full battalions were alerted to support the 130th for its final attack. The day prior to the scheduled attack, each gun was brought on target individually. When jump-off time neared the artillery gave the infantry twenty minutes of relentless preparatory fires. To the restless riflemen, waiting for the signal to advance, it appeared as though the unbridled fury of the barrage would shear the crest from the hill.

With the cessation of fires three companies rose from the ground and stormed up Question Mark toward the Japanese strongpoint. Instead of the lethal bands of machine-gun fire which had shredded them two days before, assault units found a shocked and helpless enemy, too shaken by concussion to offer organized resistance. In exactly thirty-two minutes every Nip on the hilltop had been wiped out and every crew-served weapon was either seized or destroyed. Friendly casualties on Question Mark: one man killed and nine wounded, four or five by their own errant grenades.

Official Japanese casualty figures for the Luzon campaign testify to the effectiveness of Golden Cross howitzer fire. Between 15 February and 30 June the 33d Division was credited with killing 14,342 enemy

troops. General Clarkson has repeatedly declared that a minimum of fifty percent of these were the direct result of artillery fire. In most military quarters fifty percent is a rather conservative estimate, still, settling for that figure, artillerymen can claim credit for more than seven thousand Nip dead in a single campaign.

Colonel Collins summarized infantry respect for artillery results in a letter written to General Paxton from his Mountain Trail CP. It follows:

HEADQUARTERS, 130th INFANTRY  
APO 33

23 June 1945

SUBJECT: Effectiveness of Artillery

To : Commanding General, 33d Division Artillery, APO 33

1. On the morning that I left KP 21 and headed toward Ambuclao and Bokod you asked me, "Do you ever find many dead Japanese?" Since you had fired a good deal of artillery in the vicinity of Ambuclao, you were particularly interested in what we might find there. At that time I informed you that though we of the Infantry thought the artillery accomplished much good, it was seldom that we found evidence of its results unless we followed in its wake. Of course, the Jap, if given time, will properly dispose of his dead.

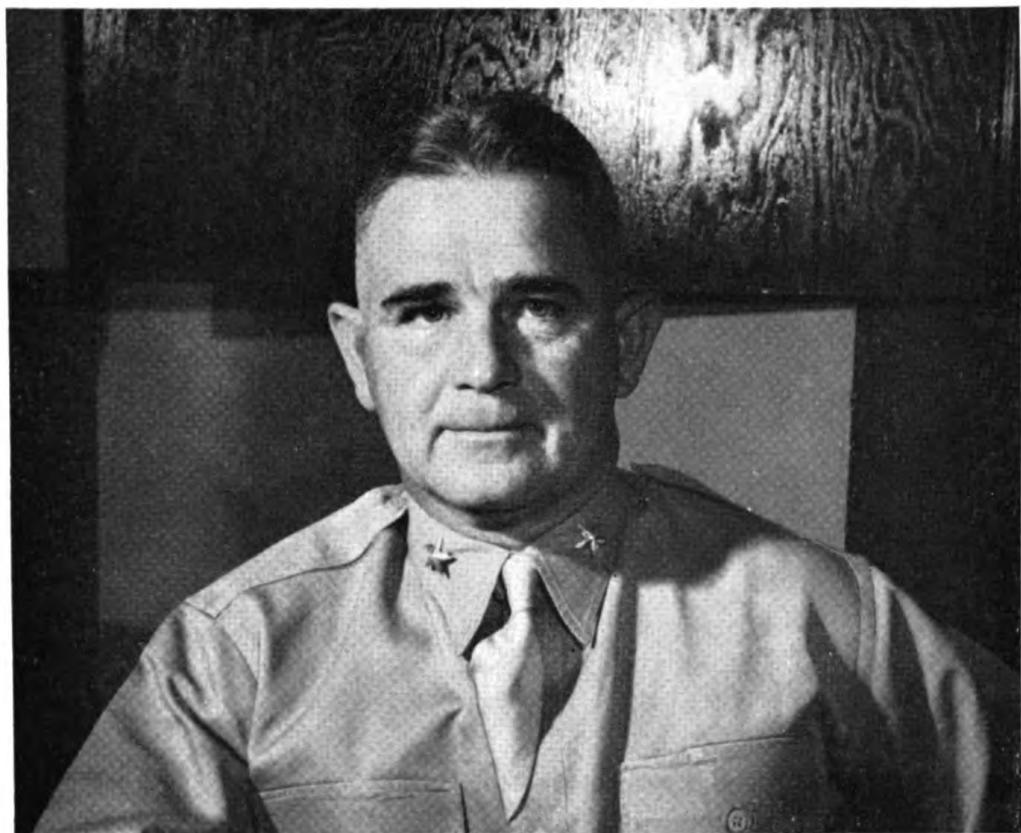
2. During our advances through the Agno River Valley and from Ambuclao to Bokod we found definite indications of the power of artillery concentrated on one target for a long period of time. The valley was literally a Valley of Death. Including 300 Japs actually killed by the 130th Infantry, there were at least 1,000 bodies strewn along the valley floor. All along the road leading into the valley were dead Japs; we counted at least 150 on the roadsides.

3. In the Bangao area there had been a direct hit on a Jap CP the night before we closed on the location. When we reached the CP we saw arms, legs, torsos and heads scattered for yards around. In addition, the Japs at Bangao, pounded all night by 155 mm howitzer fire, had little fight left in them and it was a simple matter for us to mop them up.

4. For close support, I think that the best chance we had to use and observe it occurred on the Mountain Trail during the drive to Tabio. For the first time we had all the artillery we desired and in every instance troops succeeded in mounting the objective and seizing it while the Nips were still groggy from the shelling. As one man put it, "They were so befuddled that they just crawled out of their holes and stood at 'Parade Rest'."

5. I think that all along our men have appreciated the value of artillery fire, but never more than in the Mountain Trail operation. More important, they have learned to follow right behind it with confidence and take full advantage of its shock action on the enemy.

ARTHUR S. COLLINS, Jr.  
Colonel, 130th Infantry  
Commanding



*Brigadier General Alexander G. Paxton, CG, 33d Division Artillery*

Division Artillery men are proudest of two records set on Luzon. The first is that they went through the campaign without ever losing a field piece to the enemy. Counterbattery fire, night infiltrations and mass suicide attacks all placed heavy pressure against Divarty perimeters yet they were unable to account for a single howitzer. Second, no infantry unit in the Division ever fought outside the range of Golden Cross artillery. No matter how long or difficult the displacement, the artillery always managed to accompany the infantry into battle.

Resourcefulness keynoted artillery activities throughout the war in the Pacific. No better example of this exists than the work of the Air Section in Luzon. Few people had more friends in the 33d than the artillery liaison pilots. Eleven in number, they accomplished the work of fifty men. They dropped supplies to small patrols operating well in front of the Division line. Whole battalions on the move were oriented by pilots providing "protective" cover. Platoons in the attack received immediate information on strength and disposition of enemy forces occupying their objectives.

Commanded by Major Richard F. Bortz, the Air Section exemplified cooperation between infantry and artillery. Battalion and company



commanders planning an advance were always given a chance to first survey the terrain from the air. Patrol leaders received the same consideration. Engineer parties, dispatched on reconnaissance for prospective road or bridge sites, had their leaders ferried over the hills via L-4.

More beneficial than anything else, however, was the Air Section's effect on infantry morale. To riflemen up front, the sight of a Cub plane cruising overhead was cause for rejoicing. It meant immediate relief from Japanese artillery fires. Enemy gunners, realizing that operations in the face of this observation could only bring counterbattery fire, promptly ceased activity. Mountain guns were hastily wheeled back into caves and outside camouflage buttoned into place. Nip barrages thereafter were generally reserved for dawn and dusk—before the L-4s came out or after they had retired for the night.

Every pilot in the section received the Silver Star and Air Medal; awards in which the infantry heartily concurred.

Closely allied with the Air Section was the 33d Division Artillery Photo Detachment. With no allowances made for it in the tables of organization, this unit filled a need not only for General Paxton's force but for the Division itself. Five men composed this group, employing Air Force cameras begged and borrowed at all stopping points between the Hawaiian Islands and Lingayen Gulf. Throughout the 33d's fight in the Philippines the Photo Detachment kept a constant flow of pictures streaming to ground commanders and G-2 and G-3. Troop leaders, and intelligence and operations chiefs were thereby given an accurate concept of terrain long before they were committed to it.

Every photo mission was flown over enemy-held territory and often at altitudes below three hundred feet. Frequently, bands of Japanese, cognizant that they were out of artillery range, engaged the Cubs with machine-gun and rifle fire. Most planes assigned to photo missions returned home bearing the scars of combat on wings and fuselage. During the Luzon campaign forty photo missions were flown, more than a thousand aerial shots made, and some 7,400 prints distributed among commanders, staffs and front-line troops.

Whether it be pictures or howitzers, it is axiomatic that artillerymen love to shoot.

Not satisfied with serving and maintaining twelve firing batteries, General Paxton's men took on an additional battery during the final stage of the battle for Baguio. Like the Photo Detachment, this too was non-TO. Behind the Division's forward line, rusting away in captured matériel dumps, were six Japanese howitzers. Offensive-



*J Battery in action*

mindful as always, the grey-thatched artillery commander could see no reason why these valuable weapons should remain idle to be combed over by rear-echelon souvenir hunters. He detailed Capt. Darrell T. Hill, a native of San Antonio, Texas, to organize a small artillery cadre, augment it with as many Filipino soldiers as he could handle and then train the entire conglomeration on the captured guns.

Hill pitched into the assignment with contagious enthusiasm. He and his men, by common consent, immediately christened the new unit J Battery—J for Jap. Next they attempted to convert their six non-functioning pieces into four which were capable of joining the fight. All reconditioning work was necessarily done by the trial-and-error system.

Sergeant Edward Dobbie, battery mechanic, tried almost every type of recoil fluid in Division and Corps ordnance before finding one which blended with the guns. Cpl. Charles Melnik, J Battery's motor sergeant, furnished prime movers by breaking down four wrecked enemy trucks into two mobile ones. Nip radios, wire and telephones were slowly restored to working order. Filipinos training on the pieces kept pace with the improvement of equipment. Finally, J Battery was given its first fire mission. When the howitzers were emplaced and a protective cordon thrown around gun positions, every man in the battery was armed with Japanese ordnance. Rapid-firing Nambu supplanted Browning light machine guns and BARs; Arisakas replaced M-1s and Nip grenades were used in place of the standard American "pineapple."

The theme was carried out to the extent that Filipino gun crews

used captured Jap fish and rice for the main part of their diet instead of the regularly issued C and K rations.

Early fire missions were restricted to long-range harassments. After scores of these J Battery was permitted to fire in support of ground actions. In view of the criticisms directed against enemy ordnance by senior commanders, the results achieved by this novel unit were surprising. Their effectiveness was remarkable. Lt. Charles Nye, battery reconnaissance officer, succinctly summed it up with the observation that "it isn't the guns, brother, it's the technique."

Golden Cross infantry held no patent on intrepidity. Exclusive of the Medal of Honor, artillerymen shared in all other awards for heroism made to members of the Division. Distinguished Service Cross, Silver Star, Legion of Merit, Soldiers' Medal, Bronze Star Medal, Air Medal and Purple Heart—Divarty troops received them all. In the words of General Paxton, artillery's highest award was "the calm confidence of the slugging doughboy as we pulled our shots back in darkness to within fifty yards of his foxhole to wipe out a group of infiltrating Japs."

However, infantry alone did not monopolize on this "calm confidence." Artillerymen too have employed their howitzers to beat off Nip attacks against their own positions. Prime example of this is the experience of Able Battery, 123d Field Artillery, near Galiano.

Ordinarily, light artillery is a trifle closer to the front than the 155s, but in this case A Battery's mediums had been drawn up close behind the 130th Infantry to place fires on Mount Bilbil. One night at about 0200—the Japs' favorite hour for dispatching their night shift—an enemy group of platoon size managed to cut around the 130th's open flanks and veer in between the infantrymen and the artillery perimeter. Once the enemy located the howitzer positions they closed in for an attack.

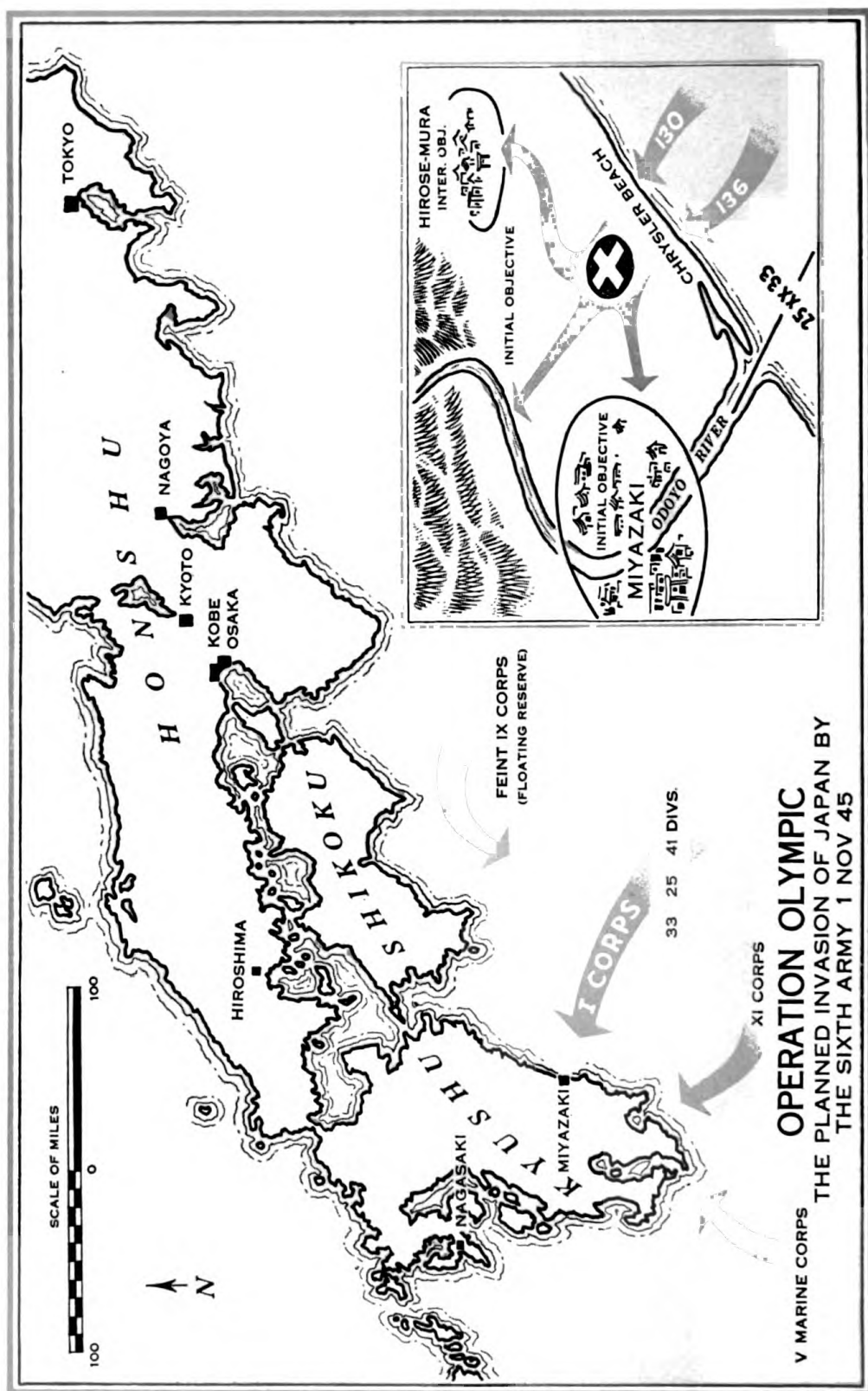
While a few Nips cut telephone lines leading back to battalion headquarters, others fearlessly threw themselves against the installation in an attempt to break through and destroy the guns. As soon as the assault materialized, redleg machine gunners on the fringe of the perimeter answered it with sustained bursts of fire. With the enemy's "*Banzai!*" battle cry ringing in his ears, the battery commander, Lt. Philip Schmidt, decided upon a radical course of action. He radioed Major Carl Ziegler, S-3 of the 124th Field Artillery, then on duty at the fire direction center, and requested immediate supporting fire from 124th pieces.

Staff Sergeant Robert Anderson quickly calculated firing data and

measured the deflection shift to the new target. Capt. Archie J. Grieg's Baker Battery was given the fire mission. Working at top speed, B Battery crews shifted trails and made ready to throw out the first rounds.

Schmidt had Baker adjusted in four rounds. Japanese perplexity at this turn of events was certainly no greater than that of Major Ziegler or the B Battery artillerymen. Regardless of the unorthodox procedure, Lieutenant Schmidt's strategy paid off handsome dividends. The enemy was forced to withdraw back to the hills and Divarty's record of safeguarding its weapons went unblemished.

Artillery contributions to victory in the battle for Baguio were varied and valuable. Never was the infantryman let down. Through swamp, rice paddy, mountain and jungle a tight, coordinated supporting arm backed him up as he drove the Japanese from the summer capital. In addition to the awesome toll of personnel exacted by Golden Cross artillery, General Paxton's force definitely accounted for the following matériel: 33 field pieces, 45 machine guns and heavy mortars, 63 ammunition dumps and 37 vehicles. Rifleman or cannoneer, it made little difference who received credit for the victory. Both branches earned a common respect as fighters who molded a powerful combat team between them.



## Chapter 19: Occupation

AT 0830 on 25 September 1945 the 130th and 136th Infantry Regiments landed abreast on Beaches Red and White near Wakayama on Honshu, Japan. In a matter of minutes the assault waves cleared the beach and consolidated the dune line. With a solid umbrella of carrier-based fighter planes overhead to cover their advances, the infantrymen promptly drove forward toward high ground four miles inland. Because of the numerous rehearsals staged on Philippine beaches, Division troops were able to execute every phase of the amphibious operation with faultless precision. Supporting units and elements of corps and army streamed ashore behind the regiments.

Another Pacific beachhead had been established. However, this one vastly differed from others. Not a shot had been fired by either Americans or Japanese.

Golden Cross personnel waded ashore prepared for any contingency. No one expected armed resistance but all were prepared to find sullenness and antagonism on the faces of the Japanese population. Instead, the columns of troops were greeted by hand-waving children and docile adults, too awe-struck by this spectacle of might to display any other emotion. Unarmed Japanese police were stationed at all assembly areas with polite interpreters to guide American forces to their lines of departure for occupation stations.

A few miles from the beaches was the city of Wakayama. A single 200-plane raid two months before had completely razed the huge industrial center, burning out all major plants and thirty-five per cent of the residential district. Evidences of the B-29 strike could be seen on all sides as only rubble remained in the place of thousands of dwellings. The stench of death emanated from the ruins. Even with the picture of Baguio fresh in their minds, Division men were not prepared to view such wholesale devastation.

This was *Dai Nippon*: Greater Japan.

Fortunately, the railroad system had been spared by American bombers. It turned out to be the prime means of moving troops and impedimenta to the 33d's occupational zone. Vehicular roads were in a sorry state of maintenance. So narrow were they in places that it was found necessary in many instances to tear down buildings at road bends to permit movement of large trucks. Tanks and some pieces of engineer equipment could not be moved at all. Division MPs, working in conjunction with local Japanese authorities, instituted a one-way system of traffic control. Elements of the 108th Engineers were immediately placed on road construction and maintenance jobs so that bulky tracked equipment could clear the beaches.

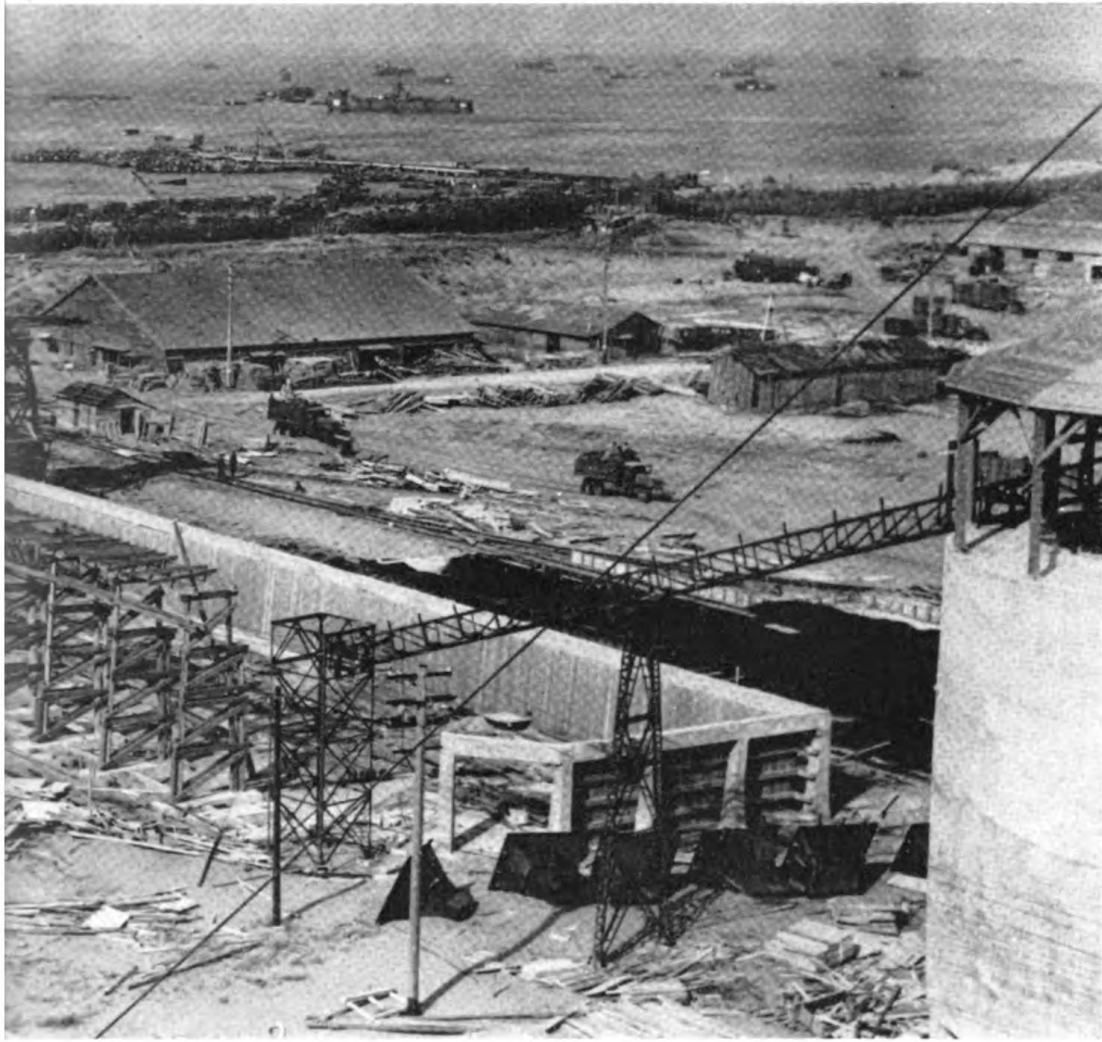




*Troops of the 33d Division come ashore*

It became imperative for the infantry units to reach their posts without delay since no bivouac areas were available in the vicinity of Wakayama. The already overcrowded city held no suitable billets and the damp rice paddies in the suburbs were fertilized with human excrement, making them unsuitable as prospective camp-sites. Troops were marched to the Wakayama railroad terminal and loaded aboard modern coaches for the ride to the Kyoto-Kobe-Himeji sector assigned the 33d Division. All command levels within the Golden Cross were amazed at the facility with which the Japanese moved the Division. More than 22,000 men and thousands of tons of cargo were transported from Wakayama without a single accident or untoward incident. Moreover, every train ran exactly on schedule.

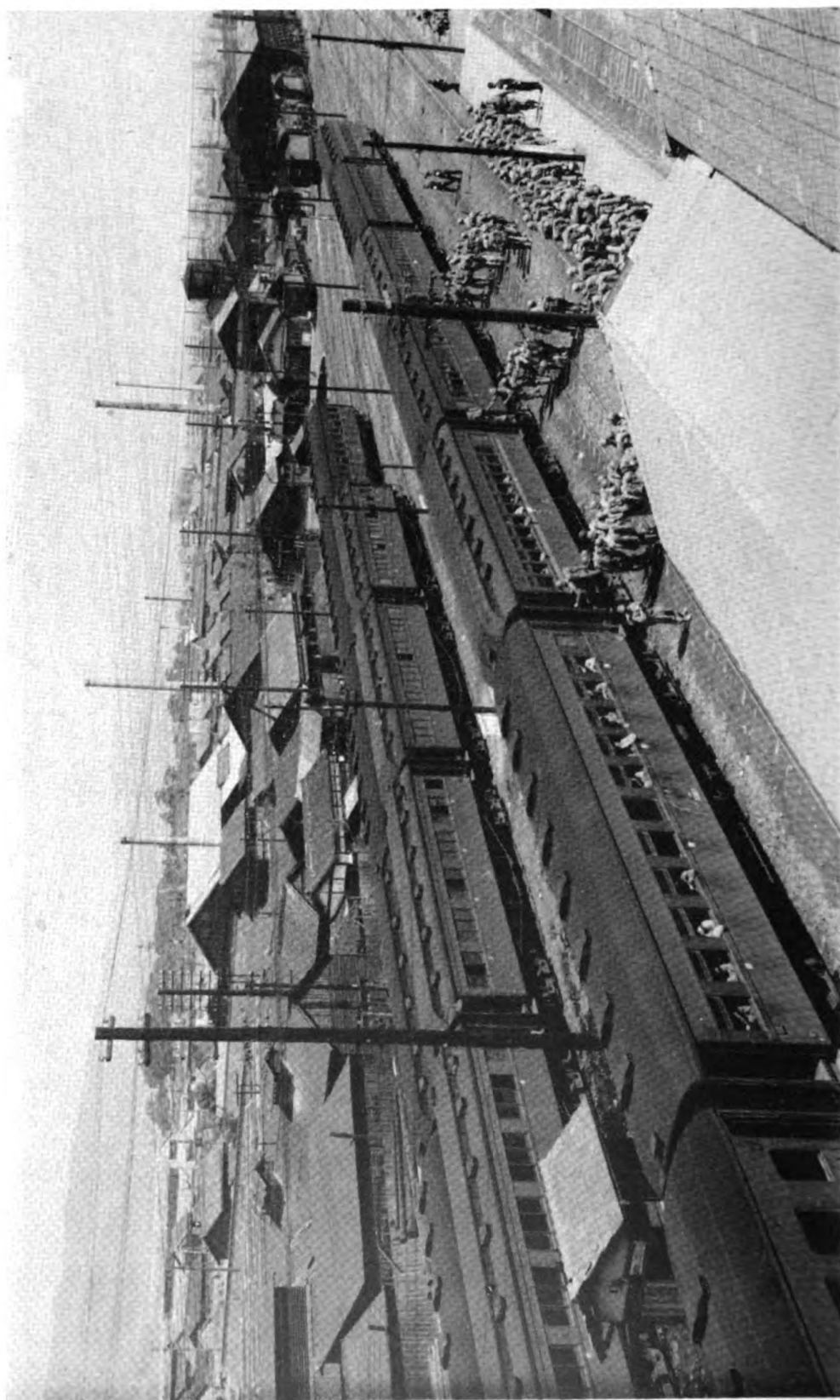
Troops reflected upon the Division's mission as they were sped



*at Wakayama on 25 September 1945*

through scenic valleys toward the six prefectures—states or districts—assigned the Golden Cross. An area of 11,467 square miles, occupied by 7,879,000 Japanese, was to come under the 33d's jurisdiction. Every yard of this area had to be disarmed and de-militarized; the authority of militarists was to be eliminated at the earliest possible moment. Arsenals were to be stripped of all war-making machines and every type of munition was to be destroyed. Enemy armed forces had to be rapidly demobilized.

These were immediate objectives. Equally important, however, was the mission of swaying the Japanese from Shintoism and Emperor worship toward government founded upon democratic principles. To accomplish this, each member of the occupation armies was required to conduct himself as a model soldier so that the American way of life



*After clearing the Wakayama beaches, troops proceeded to occupation stations by rail*



*At first the Yanks stopped traffic when they walked the streets*

could be constantly displayed to the Nipponese. Re-education, not retribution, was to be the keynote of the occupation.

Division Headquarters, the 130th Infantry, the 108th Engineer and Medical Battalions, and Special Troops had Kobe as their initial occupation post. Kobe is Japan's sixth largest city with a pre-war population of one million. Its port was among the busiest in the world, ranking second to Yokohama in Nippon. Now, however, Kobe bore scant resemblance to a thriving metropolis. Much of the residential district had been levelled; mines dropped in the harbor by American planes had made its port inoperative. Kobe's one note of beauty was lent by the high mountain range north of the city which majestically commanded the fire-swept area.

Quarters proved no problem although they were devoid of conveniences. Troops were assigned living space in hotels, department stores, warehouses and office buildings. Golden Cross headquarters was established in the Kobe Customs Building, a few blocks from the waterfront.

Division Artillery, under General Sweany—newly appointed to one-star rank—was sent to Himeji, approximately fifty miles west of Kobe. Himeji was industrial on a small scale, leather and textile plants providing employment for many of its 145,000 people. It is best known for the centuries-old White Heron Castle which once attracted hun-

dreds of Occidental tourists. But Himeji was also a vital military district housing a training camp, an arsenal, two military hospitals, an aircraft plant and large stores of munitions. Like Kobe, it had been badly battered by incendiary attacks.

Artillery's first act was to demobilize the Japanese 4th Infantry Depot Regiment, in garrison at Himeji, and send its soldiers to their homes.

An excellent assignment fell to the 136th Infantry. The Bearcats were hand-picked by General Krueger to serve in immediate support of Sixth Army Headquarters in Kyoto. During the planning phase of the occupation a regiment from another division was initially selected for this key assignment. When informed of this choice, the army commander directed his staff to junk the plan and substitute a 33d Division regiment. Colonel Cavenee's command was gratified that its efforts on Kennon Road and Skyline Ridge were appreciated at such a high level.

Kyoto held no war industries and consequently escaped the ruin that came to Kobe and Himeji. It was literally the garden spot of Japan. For hundreds of years since its establishment in 793 A.D., it had served as the capital of the Japanese Empire. Even now its magnificent gardens, beautiful shrines and grand monuments reflected the science and culture that had brought world fame to the city. Though the downheartedness of its population was evident, there was no physical taint of war on Kyoto. Commerce proceeded without interruption. Curio shops in the downtown section still displayed the rich brocades and exquisite porcelain wares turned out by the city's master artisans.

Most of the 123d Infantry garrisoned Takarazuka, another center of Nipponese culture. Scarcely a half-hour ride from industrial Kobe, this picturesque town received national recognition for its schools of drama and music. A main landmark was the Takarazuka Opera House which was to Japan what the Metropolitan Opera House in New York is to the United States. Colonel Serff set up his CP in the 4,000-seat opera house while the 1st and 2d Battalions of the 123d were quartered in outlying parts of the city.

Lieutenant Colonel Wolff's 3d Battalion was posted near Nishinomiya, midway in the 25-mile strip of industrial plants between Kobe and Osaka. The outskirts of Nishinomiya was the site of several large Japanese breweries. Once these were cleaned up, members of the 3d Battalion operated as 33d Division *bräumeisters* in addition to their other duties. Throughout the Division's stay in Japan they supplied all Golden Cross units with an excellent grade of beer.





Japanese Army barracks at Otsu were used to quarter men of the 136th Infantry

On 27 September the 130th Infantry, unhappy in its filthy department store home, was ordered to Himeji where better training facilities were available. At the same time letter companies of the medics and engineers were dispatched from Kobe to join their respective combat teams. Now the 33d was ready to attack the first phase of its occupation mission.

Demobilization of Japanese forces progressed rapidly in all sections of the Division zone of responsibility. Nipponese cooperation was all that could be desired. In a relatively short period of time thousands of troops had been cut loose from Japanese Army control and directed back to their homes to aid in the reconstruction program now confronting their country.

By mid-October the Division was firmly established in the Kobe-Himeji-Takarazuka areas. Affairs relating to the military had been kept in hand from the inception of the occupation, now civil matters were being resolved by military government personnel working in conjunction with Japanese authorities. Demands of the mission were great but nevertheless troops were given a considerable amount of leisure time. Off-duty periods were usually spent browsing around the congested city areas in search of souvenirs or in Special Services centers supervised by Red Cross workers.

Men delighted in using the difficult Japanese language even when conversing with each other. Words such as *ohayo*, *sayonara*, *ikaga desuka*, *konban wa* and *konnichi wa* became standard in the occupation soldier's vocabulary. The time-honored expression "TS" was abolished in favor of a sucking in of the breath and a mournful "*So dess.*" When talking with non-English-speaking Japanese, Golden Cross troops simply invented a language of their own. The letters "o" and "u" were added to English words, making chocolate *chocoletto*, toilet *toiletto*, time *timu*, store *storu* and so on. Armed with this convenient American-Japanese compromise in language, men were able to carry on simple conversations.





Street scene in Kobe

Close contact with the Japanese population made many soldiers wonder that these Orientals had once visualized themselves as conquerors of the United States. Though industrious, they were largely an unimaginative people, possessing little of the flexibility and industrial genius that sparked the American war effort.

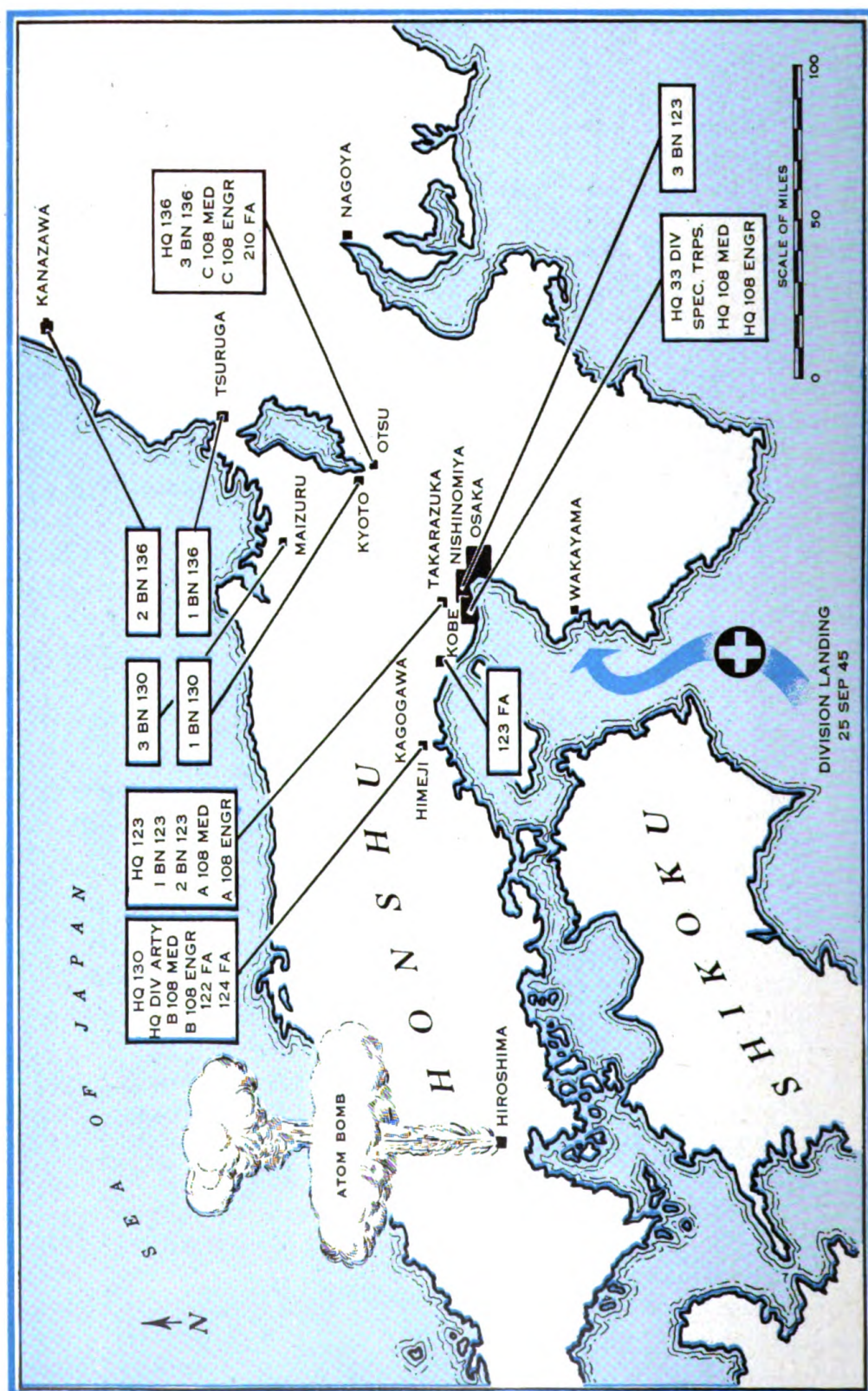
They actually lived in two worlds, one modern and the other medieval. Throughout the day the average Jap businessman dressed in western business garb and took advantage of the up-to-date rail, hotel and manufacturing facilities of Japan. After business hours he underwent a transformation. He shed his suit for a flowing kimono, his chair for a pallet on the floor, his office for a reed or frame house with straw flooring and paper windows. This inadaptability, this unwillingness to break away from centuries-old tradition was responsible in a small measure for his current plight.

On the other hand, the Japanese naïvete and respect for authority made execution of the occupation mission a far easier matter. There was never a question, never a discordant note or a temperamental outburst by Japanese officials administering American occupation policies.

Now that the principal manufacturing centers had been emasculated and thousands of Kobe-Himeji-Takarazuka troops demobilized and sent to their homes, Sixth Army directed the 33d to increase its scope of activity to include the hinterlands of the Division zone. This order was complied with on 26 and 27 October when most of the 130th and 136th Infantry Regiments were given new stations close to the northern shore of Honshu.

Headquarters of the 136th Infantry remained on the outskirts of Kyoto at Otsu on the banks of Lake Biwa. However, the 1st and 2d Battalions made long jumps. The former took over the town of Tsuruga on the Sea of Japan. Upon arriving in Tsuruga, the battalion found a Japanese infantry regiment garrisoned there. This organization was promptly demobilized and the Bearcat companies just as promptly moved into its barracks. Tsuruga was mostly a light industrial town, the majority of its 32,000 people working either in cement works or textile mills.

Kanazawa, a main port on the Sea of Japan, became the 2d Battalion's new station. This city of 200,000 souls was the home of railway repair shops, alloyed steel works, and hydroelectric plants. Several large military installations were located there. The old Kanazawa castle still remains in the heart of the city and it was from there that Lt. Colonel Haycock directed his battalion's operations. Among the Japanese Army units demobilized at Kanazawa were two medical bat-



Map 29: Division occupation stations





*A Jap laborer feeds Arisaka rifle barrels to a press*

talions, an infantry regiment, a mortar battalion and a number of artillery, engineer, signal and transportation groups.

Colonel Collins of the 130th sent his 3d Battalion to the port of Maizuru, a city of 80,000 dependent upon the sea for its livelihood. A sizable task faced members of this unit since 54,000 members of the Imperial Japanese Navy were still occupying the Maizuru Naval District in anticipation of demobilization orders. The battalion also found one cruiser, six destroyers and seven submarines tied up at the Maizuru Naval Station fronting the harbor.

With a healthy portion of the Golden Cross deployed in the hinterlands, the Division embarked on the most dangerous of its occupation duties: actual destruction and disposal of ammunition and weapons of war.

At this time the 33d began to suffer severe losses in personnel due to the redeployment program. Leaving at the end of October, the first groups to start for the United States included almost all of the noncommissioned officers who had started with the Golden Cross at Camp Forrest in 1941-42. Rapid promotions were made to fill these vacancies and an influx of young and inexperienced replacements partially offset the cut in manpower. However, the bulk of occupation duties continued

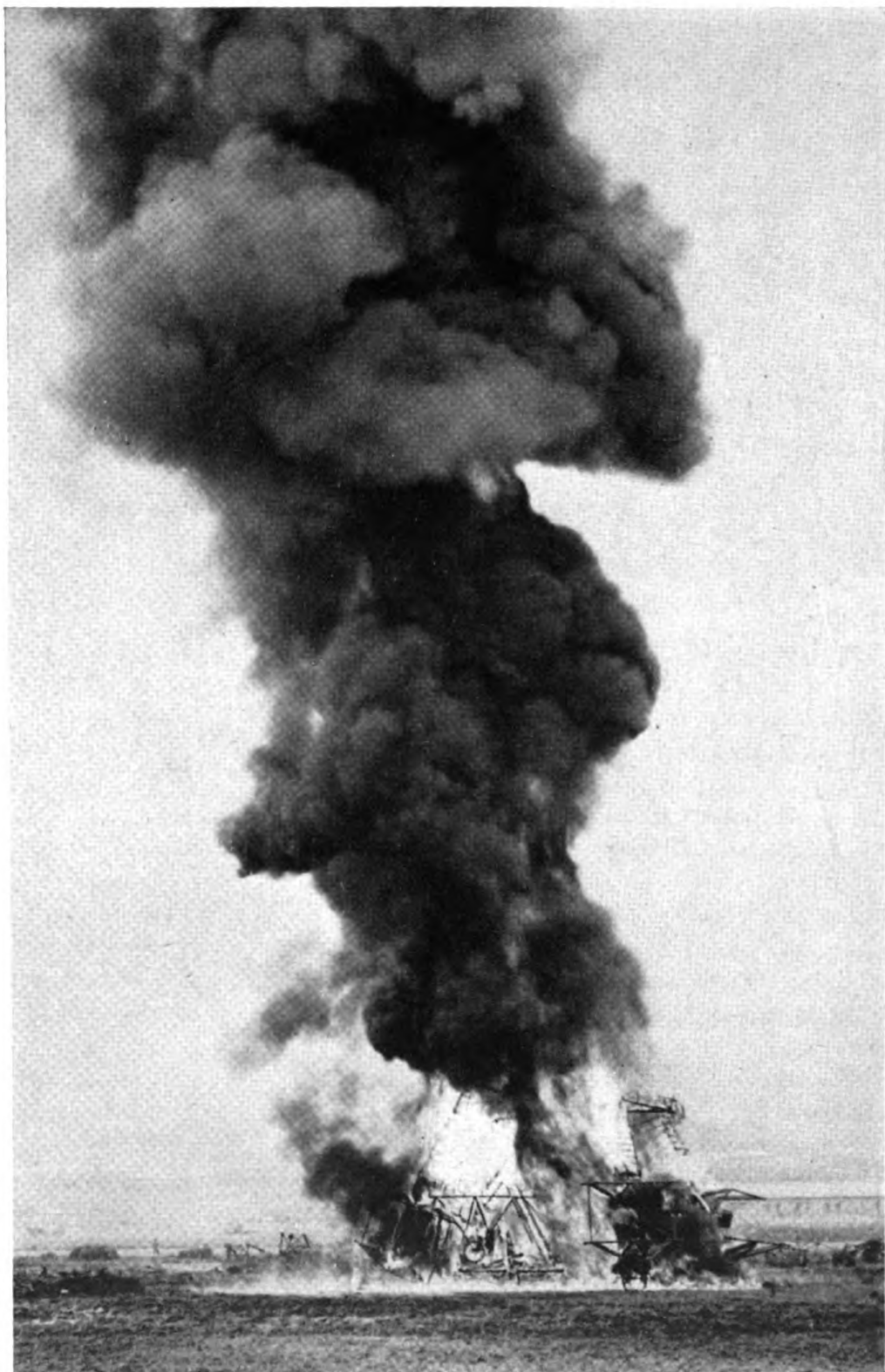


*Japanese civilians wheel a seaplane to the "boneyard"*

to fall on the older hands since the new recruits had to be grounded in military subjects before participating in the arms-destruction program. General Clarkson personally bade farewell to outgoing elements of his command. The rail yards at Kobe—assembly area for all returning personnel—resembled New Orleans at Mardi Gras time when filled with home-bound soldiers. Band music filled the air. Horse-play, back-slapping, loud goodbyes and cries of "See you in Chicago!" echoed through the yards. The Division Commander tossed aside formality to mingle with the crowd of returnees, exchanging wise-cracks and wishing a speedy return to all. Then the long trains noisily puffed away for Kobe, bound for the port of Nagoya, as the band played the traditional "Auld Lang Syne." This scene became a bi-monthly occurrence during the rest of the 33d's stay in Japan.

## II

Enemy weapons were destroyed with facility. Small arms, mortars, aerial machine guns and artillery pieces were thrown into large furnaces and then removed to presses where they were smashed into scrap. Upon completion of this process the metal was turned over to the Japanese Home Ministry for limited industrial use. Tools and ma-



*A dozen enemy seaplanes go up in smoke at Himeji*





*Ammunition and explosives were loaded on barges, towed out to sea, and then dumped overboard*

chinery were spared from the presses in the event they could be gainfully employed by the civilian population in some peaceful pursuit. Japanese officials were responsible for the distribution of this material.

Airplanes received special attention. Occupation policy called for the absolute destruction of the Japanese air potential. Jap civilians, working under Division supervision, first cut the planes into several small pieces with acetylene torches. Fuselages were then stacked into tall pyres and set afire. Charred frameworks and pieces of scrap ended up on the presses. Engines were destroyed separately. Orders from General MacArthur's headquarters directed that air training stations and other airfields be placed under cultivation to alleviate the critical food shortage.

Disposal of ammunition was a proposition fraught with difficulty and danger. Projectiles of all calibers had been dispersed all over Japan in dugouts, caves, warehouses, arsenals and even in open fields. Decentralization and excellent employment of concealment had permitted these vast stocks to escape American air strikes. Whatever shortages the Japanese had suffered in the course of the war, ammunition was certainly not one of them. The method of ammunition disposal became a matter of prime concern to General Clarkson, once these overwhelming quantities were inventoried.

They could not be exploded in place because of the risk of injury to civilians. To detonate these stores in smaller batches would take

more than a year due to the great labor requirements. Finally it was decided to haul the ammunition to the closest ports and dump it into the sea. But even this solution was not without entanglements.

It became necessary to truck ammunition from its points of dispersal to railheads for subsequent transfer to port cities. Upon arrival at harbors the stores of explosives were transferred to tugs and barges, hauled several miles offshore and then dumped overboard. Mobilization of rolling stock for the rail haul was promptly accomplished by Japanese railroads but the supply of barges was limited. Army bombers and carrier-based Navy planes included these small craft in their toll during waterfront strikes prior to the end of hostilities. To top off the situation, it became necessary to repair dock facilities in the port cities before large-scale jettisoning of explosives could begin.

This combination of unfavorable conditions caused bottlenecks at the ports. In turn, additional hazards were encountered since hundreds of carloads of ammunition were kept idle in rail yards pending disposition. The Division had several accidents during the transfer from rail to barge and at sea in handling the explosives incident to dumping. A remarkably few 33d men were injured in the course of such mishaps, but a number of Japanese laborers were killed or injured while engaged in loading and unloading ammunition.

Gradually, major difficulties incident to dumping operations were resolved. In November, Kobe Harbor was swept of mines and opened to limited traffic. A large share of ammunition disposal work was transferred to this location as a result. Use of this additional outlet point materially hastened this phase of the mission.

Repatriation of Japanese troops still overseas was another function undertaken by the 33d Division. Under the terms of the Potsdam Declaration it was mandatory that all enemy forces still manning far-flung Pacific outposts be permitted to lay down their arms and return to Japan. Practically all Japanese shipping remaining in home waters was mobilized for this assignment. Initial orders from higher headquarters specified that Golden Cross detachments would accompany each vessel leaving from a port within the Division zone. These groups were to serve as escort guards during the runs to and from foreign stations.

A vigorous protest came from the Division Commander at this proposal. He realized that such action would disperse elements of his command to all parts of the Pacific Ocean. Also, General Clarkson ascertained that conditions aboard Japanese ships were indescribable. Sanitation was at a sickening level. Employing these findings as his



*"This is a goin' home train!"*

points of discussion, the General caused reconsideration of the directive and its eventual withdrawal. Subsequent events vindicated his judgment. Repatriation progressed successfully without the necessity of subjecting American forces to the hazards of life on Japanese merchant vessels.

Still, the 33d maintained an active role in execution of the repatriation program. Most of this duty fell to the 3d Battalion, 130th Infantry, posted at Maizuru, a designated port of entry for repatriates. Each Jap had to be screened to determine his background and destination; he had to be deloused, given a physical examination, housed, fed and finally transported to his home. It was certainly a novel experience for 3d Battalion personnel to process Nipponese soldiers in light of their still-vivid recollections of Bench Mark and Question Mark Hills.

Besides ammunition disposal and repatriation work, the Golden Cross was ordered to maintain a constant surveillance over the civilian population residing within Division boundaries. Japanese police handled this task, but large reserves of military police were held in readiness should armed support be required. In localities such as Kobe and Himeji, which experienced a continual turnover of populace, responsible commanders developed elaborate plans to combat riots and disturbances. Railroad terminals received an especially watchful eye. The modern,

sprawling stations served as convention halls, trading centers and loitering points for multitudes of Japanese. Black marketeers, political outlaws, peddlers and hawkers used them as assembly areas.

In addition to these elements was the horde of homeless repatriates who aimlessly wandered around the battered cities during the day and returned to the stations at dusk. Sparks for trouble were ever present and on occasion political or black-market arguments caused sudden conflagrations. Generally Japanese police were equal to the situation but it became necessary a few times to call out the 33d Division MPs. Their mere presence infallibly quelled the melees. Railroad stations were backdrops for pathos as well as turbulence. One could always find several families camped on drafty platforms, scanning passengers and passersby in search of their missing sons. American troops on duty at Kobe's Sanomiya station found two youngsters, aged eight and ten, squatting on the platform in an emaciated, half-starved condition. Brothers, the boys had spent six weeks in the terminal seeking a soldier-brother whose fate was unknown to them. Throughout their vigil the lads had subsisted on scraps of garbage. Division clothed them and fed them and then turned the children over to the proper Japanese authority.

### III

On 20 November the 33d Division lost its commander when General Clarkson was elevated to command of X Corps with headquarters at Kure in Southern Honshu. Proud of this recognition given his service, the General nevertheless departed reluctantly. At a farewell dinner tendered by members of his staff he frankly remarked that if the choice were his, he would prefer to stay on with the Division that he had trained and fought with since October 1943. Just the night before his transfer General Clarkson had been awarded the Distinguished Service Medal by General Krueger for his leadership during the Philippine campaign.

Members of the Golden Cross were saddened by the General's departure. His courage, concern for the welfare of his command and warm personality had made him a "doughboy's general" in the eyes of the Division. On the day he left Kobe a battalion of combat veterans, serving as an honor guard, rendered General Clarkson his merited salute on behalf of every man in the 33d. General Skelton, Assistant Division Commander, assumed command and remained at the helm of the Golden Cross until its inactivation.



General Clarkson inspects his honor guard as he relinquishes command of the 33d Division. On his right are Captain William Crenshaw, guard commander, and Brigadier General Winfred G. Skelton, his successor as CG of the Golden Cross.

Not all was work for the 33d Division despite the demanding and unprecedented operations in progress. Augmenting movies and USO shows as chief items of entertainment was an athletic program more ambitious than any heretofore launched. A Pacific Olympics was outlined in which the best teams of AFPAC, AFWESPAC, Philippine-Ryukyus Command and Pacific Ocean Areas would participate. Competition was to be held in football, basketball, tennis, golf, baseball, swimming and track. Golden Cross Special Services supervised the job of producing the 33d's representatives at this athletic jamboree.

Football, currently in season, received primary attention. Lt. Robert Fulton, 108th Engineers, formerly an assistant coach at the University of Tennessee, was made head coach of the 33d gridgers. His first call for candidates brought scores of players in from the hinterlands. These men were trained, housed and fed together in the best campus style. Koshein Stadium, located between Kobe and Osaka, was the Golden Cross home park.

Opening game took place on 9 December against a smartly drilled 98th Division club. More than half of the 40,000-seat stadium was filled with soldiers. Al Schacht, popular baseball comedian, was on hand to do his inimitable pantomime and lead the band through pre-game didos. Maj. Gen. Roscoe B. Woodruff, successor to General Swift as CG of I Corps, added a holiday touch by coming down out of the stands to make the first kickoff. The new corps commander made many friends that afternoon. His placement travelled fifty-five yards on the fly.

The 33d's team dropped its opening game 19-7, but whipped the 98th by three touchdowns in a return game. Two contests were also played with the 1st Cavalry Division, the Troopers taking the first 6-0, then losing to the Golden Cross by a 14-0 score. The cavalymen were captained by Lt. Tom Lombardo, quarterback of the 1944 Army team which went through its season without defeat. Lt. Dale Hall, left end for the Troopers, also was a regular on that Davis-Blanchard grid machine. Halfback Kenneth Stofer, an engineer lieutenant, was the 33d's only established star. He captained Cornell's team in 1942 and played with Buffalo of the All-American Conference in 1946.

Basketball equalled football in popularity. Every big town within the Division zone held at least one large gymnasium and battalion teams were able to work into shape. The gym at Kobe was so spacious that in addition to a regulation court, the floor held three badminton courts and several pool and ping-pong tables. Games played in Kobe usually drew several hundred spectators. An elimination tourna-



ment within the Division produced a Golden Cross champion. However, this team met defeat at Tokyo in the quarter-finals of the Olympic playoffs.

By New Year's Day 1946, the 33d had undergone a complete face-lifting. Combat veterans had long since departed; old-timers numbered no more than a handful. Now the gold-and-black patch was worn by callow replacements and officers who had spent the war training troops in the United States.

On 9 January Headquarters, Eighth Army—designated the American occupation army—instructed Division Headquarters to prepare for early inactivation. Before January was gone 595 officers and 8,514 men had been transferred to other units in Japan. One by one the battalions were closed out as they were stripped of personnel. Regiments of the 24th and 25th Divisions assumed responsibility for the 33d's zone of occupation.

The 33d Infantry Division was officially inactivated on 5 February 1946.

Although no parades or fanfare accompanied its inactivation, the Golden Cross needed none of this to embellish its proud record. Division spirit and efficiency had contributed much to victory in the Pacific. No unit was assigned a greater assortment of tasks and no unit performed with more gallantry and honor. It had supported the defense of the Hawaiian Islands in 1943 when American war fortunes were at a low ebb. A year later the 33d patrolled the dank swamps and rain forests of New Guinea, even working as stevedores when it became vital to move supplies to Sixth Army spearheads.

In December 1944 the 33d first carried the fight to the enemy. Through amphibious assault and protracted jungle operations it smashed an enemy force which threatened to recapture the island of Morotai. Then followed the brutal campaign in the Philippines where the 33d fought over "impassable" mountains, liberating the city of Baguio and destroying 15,000 Japanese in the process. Its World War II career was capped by four and a half months of occupation duty, a final show of its versatility.

No finer tribute can be rendered the 33d Division than the words of General MacArthur, who wrote: "My confidence in it during the vicissitudes of campaign was complete and it never failed me."

Battle Deaths  
Decorations  
Distinguished Unit Citations



*United States Cemetery No. 1 at Santa Barbara, Luzon,*



*Philippine Islands. Most Golden Cross dead are interred here.*

*123 Infantry Regiment*

Pfc Jose G. Arguello  
 Pfc Henry R. Avara  
 T/Sgt Howard A. Backs  
 T/Sgt Aubrey Baker  
 Pfc Walter W. Bieganowski  
 Pfc Buford B. Blair  
 Pfc Urban Blanton  
 1st Lt Charles R. Buford  
 T/5 J. D. Caldwell  
 1st Sgt Orville A. Colby  
 Pfc Raymond H. Collins  
 S/Sgt William L. Coutts, Jr.  
 Pfc Michael Danielewski  
 Pfc Lewis J. Dawson  
 Pvt Philip C. DeCamp  
 T/Sgt Luther M. Deichman  
 Sgt Roy B. Deppe  
 1st Lt John L. Durant  
 S/Sgt John J. Dusenberry  
 Cpl Harless Dyer  
 T/Sgt Clarence C. Fletcher  
 Pfc Harold H. Ford  
 Pfc Floyd J. Frank  
 Pfc Floyd S. Frickie  
 Pfc Salvador Guajardo  
 Pfc Robert S. Hackett  
 Pfc Alex Harbaczewski  
 T/5 Elvin W. Hargis  
 Pfc Clifford F. Hazen  
 Pfc John P. Hegarty  
 Pfc Eusebio D. Hernandez  
 Pfc Ross A. Hodges  
 T/5 James F. Hogan  
 Pfc Kenneth W. Hollenbeck  
 Pfc Eldon M. Homan  
 Pfc Ernest J. Howard  
 Pfc Stanley M. Jendro  
 S/Sgt Howard E. Johnson  
 T/4 Roy R. Johnson  
 T/Sgt Conrad R. Jones  
 Pfc Robert J. Just  
 T/Sgt John V. Klacik  
 Pfc Bronislaus F. Koski  
 Pfc Edward Kwarciak  
 Pfc Bernard LaBarbera  
 Pfc Melvin W. Larsen

Pfc Joseph Lubinsky  
 Pfc Waldemar L. Luepke  
 Pfc Charles R. Lybert  
 Pfc Anthony J. Mark  
 Pfc Hubert McCain  
 T/5 Clarence McConnell  
 Sgt Paul Messaris  
 S/Sgt Edward J. Meyer  
 T/4 Steve J. Morales  
 Pfc Casper L. Nagy  
 Pfc Harvey C. Nesseler  
 Sgt David H. Odle  
 Pfc James C. O'Donnell  
 Pfc Glenn R. Oliver  
 Pvt F. B. Orrell  
 Pfc Werner T. Pappenfuss  
 Pfc Harry L. Parsons  
 Sgt Stanley A. Pedtke  
 Pfc Henry E. Piper  
 Pfc Roland E. Plattner  
 Pfc Everett C. Potts  
 Sgt Fred J. Povolish  
 S/Sgt Frank J. Rauch  
 1st Lt John F. Reardon  
 Capt Vernon G. Rexroat  
 Pfc Willie C. Richardson  
 Pfc Sherwood L. Robinson  
 2nd Lt Walter B. Roper  
 Pfc Charles E. Sanders  
 Pfc Frank M. Schliechert  
 Pfc Ernest Schramm  
 1st Lt Edward Schuster  
 Pfc Clayton D. Selleck  
 Pfc Merlin W. Shively  
 Pfc Francis L. Sleep  
 Pfc John R. Thomas  
 Pfc Orbon Thomas, Jr.  
 S/Sgt Edward Taucher  
 Pfc Robert L. Thompson  
 S/Sgt Fred J. Van Assen  
 Pfc Arthur R. Waddell  
 Sgt Lester J. Weaver  
 S/Sgt William A. Webb  
 Pfc William J. Webber  
 Pfc Charles W. Weber  
 Pfc Merton G. Yocum  
 Pfc Harold C. Young

This list was compiled by the Adjutant General's Office, Department of the Army. Errors of omission may exist.

Pfc Antonio Yraguen  
 Pfc John Zavattiere  
 Pfc William F. Zimmerle

*130 Infantry Regiment*

Pfc Henry S. Aldridge  
 Sgt Melvin W. Apell  
 Pfc Silvino J. Avesani  
 S/Sgt Acel D. Baker  
 Major Bob Balch  
 Pfc Samuel P. Baratta  
 Pfc John J. Bawolik  
 Sgt Philip A. Beaman  
 Sgt Grover W. Beckwith  
 Pfc James W. Binkley  
 Sgt Murrel L. Blaylock  
 S/Sgt Gabor Bok  
 S/Sgt John C. Bower  
 Pfc Elmer Braack  
 Pfc Clarence G. Brimer  
 S/Sgt Harold I. Brockhouse  
 Pfc Nathan Bromberg  
 Pfc Kenneth Brown  
 Pfc Raymond G. Byczek  
 Pvt John J. Byrnes  
 Pfc Pdraig J. Calnan  
 T/Sgt Taylor L. Carter  
 1st Lt Frank L. Cary  
 Pfc Carl C. Cass  
 Sgt Kenneth A. Cathony  
 Pvt Oddie O. Chapman  
 Pfc Bernard F. Clayton  
 Pfc William F. Clemens  
 Pfc Harold K. Coldwell  
 Pfc William E. Colvin  
 Sgt Carl M. Crabtree  
 2d Lt Joseph A. Cramer  
 Sgt John P. Crammond  
 Pvt Lawrence R. DeView  
 Pfc Settimio J. DiSanzo  
 Pfc Anthony DiMuccio  
 Pfc Floyd F. Eagan  
 Pfc Forest G. Eaken  
 Pvt Eugene B. Evans  
 Pfc James E. Fellows, Jr.  
 1st Lt George R. Ferko  
 Pfc Vincent A. Fertitta  
 1st Lt James E. Finn  
 Sgt Jefferson D. French

S/Sgt Robert L. Gaede  
 Pfc Robert G. Gangloff  
 Pfc Robert Gardner  
 Sgt Edwin L. Garnier  
 Sgt Harold E. Garrison  
 Pfc Claudie C. Gilmer  
 S/Sgt Elmer G. Goetsch  
 Pvt Oakave F. Griffin  
 Pvt Wayne G. Hawkins  
 T/5 Albert P. Hays  
 T/4 Worth C. Helmer  
 Pfc Clarence C. Hollister  
 Pfc Norman D. Hubbard  
 Pfc Luther P. Hughes  
 Pvt Marion Hurst  
 1st Lt William B. Jewitt  
 Pfc Keith H. Jokisch  
 Pfc Don N. Jones  
 Pfc Everett Jorgensen  
 Pfc Michael J. Kelly  
 Pfc Jimmy B. Kettler  
 1st Lt Robert R. Kimball  
 Pfc Michael J. Klimczak  
 S/Sgt Walter J. Kotch  
 Pvt Adam J. Kovaluskie  
 Pfc Peter Krainichyn  
 Pfc Orville T. Kuhlmann  
 Pfc Emil F. Kvak  
 Pfc Anthony L. Lange  
 Pfc Robert M. Larson  
 Pfc James D. Leabo  
 S/Sgt Paul A. Light  
 Pfc Robert F. Linder  
 Capt Norman H. Litz  
 Pfc Charles Lockhart  
 T/Sgt Nicholas J. Lutzie  
 Pfc Ernest L. Lynch  
 Pfc Rosalio H. Manzanaris  
 Pfc Charles F. Martin  
 Pfc Edward A. Martin  
 Pvt Kenneth M. Mason  
 Pfc Ysidro Mata  
 Pfc Leon J. Mattsen  
 Sgt Noah Meeler  
 T/5 Dominic J. Messineo  
 Pfc Johnie K. Miller  
 Pfc Julius Minkan  
 Pfc Frank L. Miotke  
 S/Sgt Delos W. Mitchell



Pfc Louis A. Montelpasse  
 Pfc John R. Morris  
 Pfc Robert D. Moyer  
 Pfc George E. Mummy  
 Pfc Raymond E. Murphy  
 S/Sgt Warren E. Nehmer  
 Sgt Wayne G. Nelson  
 Pfc Rubin L. Ness  
 Pvt Anthony J. Orrino  
 S/Sgt Thomas O. Owens  
 Pfc Aulton Pace  
 Pfc Manuel C. Pacheco  
 Sgt August Pederzolli  
 S/Sgt Elmer F. Peterson  
 Sgt Clifford E. Pinney  
 Pfc Herbert T. Pledger  
 Pfc Carl P. Plum  
 Pfc David A. Presley  
 S/Sgt Edward G. J. Rajknecht  
 Pvt Ocie W. Raper  
 S/Sgt Wilbur H. Rausch  
 Pfc Albert A. Risi  
 Pfc Richard D. Rogers  
 Pfc Herbert E. Rose  
 Pfc Anthony J. Ruddy  
 Pfc Michael J. Russo  
 Pfc James Sabio  
 Pvt Frederick L. Scheid  
 Pfc Paul A. Schkirke  
 Pfc Clarence Schmidt  
 S/Sgt Harold E. Schrum  
 Sgt John M. Scodino  
 Pfc Marion B. Scott  
 Pvt Gail F. Shipman  
 Pvt Floyd H. Sinclair  
 Pfc Wayne S. Slusher  
 Pfc Juan Soto  
 Cpl Glen M. Staley  
 Sgt Vernon L. Stansbury  
 Pfc Carl A. Steger  
 T/5 Lloyd R. Stenerson  
 T/Sgt Paul D. Sterling  
 Pfc Ervin I. Stover  
 Pfc Moises Teniente  
 Pfc Hollis H. Thaxton  
 Pfc Wesley D. Tjosaas  
 Pvt Carl J. Vestal  
 Pfc Philip C. Villanueva  
 Pfc Bennie R. Wagner

Pfc Martin Warshawsky  
 Pfc Norbert W. Weber  
 Pfc Doneivon L. Weeks  
 S/Sgt Paul I. Wegman  
 Pfc Mark E. Weldin  
 T/Sgt John White, Jr.  
 Sgt Lawrence R. White  
 T/Sgt Charles L. Whitlock  
 Pfc Henry A. Wilcox  
 S/Sgt George F. Williams  
 1st Lt John A. Winkler  
 Sgt Mervin H. Wise  
 S/Sgt Howard E. Woodford  
 Pfc Walter E. Workman  
 Pfc James E. Yates  
 Pfc Francisco G. Ybarra  
 Pfc Thomas J. Zalesak  
 S/Sgt Gesuele A. Zambrano  
 Pfc Paul Zaya

*136th Infantry Regiment*

Pfc John R. Abramson  
 Pvt Henry G. Adams  
 T/Sgt Edwin J. Algar  
 Pfc Eulogio Alvarez  
 T/Sgt Delwin H. Andersen  
 Pfc Elmer T. Andersen  
 T/5 Harold D. Anderson  
 1st Lt Boyd I. Antes  
 Pvt Peter J. Antonopoulos  
 Pfc Lonus A. Ashburn  
 Pfc Marion T. Baker  
 Pfc Stanley A. Baluk  
 Pfc Daniel D. Barron  
 Pfc Max O. Bassett  
 Pfc Woodrow W. Batchelor  
 T/5 Frank C. Baur  
 Pvt Eckert L. Bearden  
 Pfc Samuel C. Bennett  
 S/Sgt Ernest F. Beran  
 Pfc Jacob J. Bewalda  
 Pfc Edmund W. Bielefeld  
 Sgt Eugene L. Bladecki  
 S/Sgt Robert O. Blick  
 Sgt Raymond Bolhouse  
 Pfc Frank Borkowski  
 Pfc Wilbur L. Brewer  
 Pvt Frank W. Briggs  
 1st Lt Joseph J. Bunch

Pfc Wilbert T. Burns  
Pfc Edwin L. Burr  
1st Lt Frank J. Bushka  
Pfc Arnold G. Butler  
Pfc Wiley Capples  
Pfc Richard E. Cavanaugh  
1st Sgt Dale Cheeley  
S/Sgt Robert D. Chrisman  
Pfc George A. Clark  
Pfc James L. Clark  
T/Sgt Joe C. Costiloe  
S/Sgt Francis R. Curnow  
Sgt Thomas H. Davidson  
1st Lt Jack J. Davis  
Sgt Melvin J. Davis  
Pvt William B. Davis  
Pfc Claburn A. Davison  
Pvt George M. Dennis  
Pfc James B. Dillard  
Pfc Edwin R. Dore  
Pfc Jerry L. Doty  
Pfc Marvin E. Drake  
Sgt James F. Drennan  
Pfc Robert L. Drinnin  
Pfc William Drogemuller  
Sgt Norman H. Dustman  
Pfc Forrest Dyer  
Pfc Michael Dziedzic  
Pfc Arvo J. Erickson  
Sgt Harold C. Erickson  
Pfc Harry G. Evans  
Sgt Elmer A. Feather  
Pfc Robert Fitzpatrick  
Pfc Roy E. Franklin  
Pfc Lawrence T. Franks  
Sgt Haskell M. Garrett  
Pfc Lawrence E. Geror  
Pfc Paul B. Gish  
Sgt Bruno W. Golinski  
Pfc Floyd J. Gottlob  
1st Lt Thurman E. Gray  
Pfc Raymond R. Greene  
Pfc James R. Griffin  
Pfc Bernard F. Grimmeke  
Pvt Roy J. Grobar  
Sgt Charles Gudonis  
Pvt John W. Guest  
T/4 Benjamin L. Hall  
S/Sgt Julius C. Harrell

1st Lt William M. Harrill  
Pfc Eugene F. Harrow  
Pvt Louis Hatfield  
Pfc Lloyd F. Hayes  
Pfc Clinton Heiber  
Pfc Herbert Henry, Jr.  
Pfc William H. Hicks  
Pfc Oscar E. Hietikko  
S/Sgt LeRoy C. Hoefling  
Pfc Woodrow W. Hoffer  
Pvt Leo D. Hollingshead  
Pvt Joseph Hruska  
Pfc Frank P. Hurley, Jr.  
T/Sgt George A. Hyypio  
Pvt Willis R. Irish  
2d Lt Harold C. Jackson, Jr.  
S/Sgt Oliver N. Jackson  
Pfc John A. Jacobsen  
Pfc Hilbert C. Janssen  
Pfc Robert E. Johns  
Sgt Arthur Johnsen  
Pfc Lester Johnson  
Sgt Melvin C. Johnson  
T/5 Charles W. Jungck  
S/Sgt Arthur C. Keyster  
Pfc Albert E. Kitchens  
Pfc Elmer M. Knight  
Cpl Willis R. Knisely  
Sgt Warren J. Koepke  
Cpl Robert O. Kopplin  
S/Sgt Wesley N. Korpinen  
Sgt William C. Kozely  
Pfc Ingvold O. Krigsvold  
Pfc Joseph G. Krupp  
Sgt Max R. Kujawa  
Pfc Samuel M. Land  
Pvt John R. Laude  
2d Lt Walter C. Lauth  
S/Sgt Alphonsus L. Leary  
Pfc Burton J. Lee  
1st Lt Kermit A. Lee  
Pfc Leonard N. Lempke  
Pvt Joseph Leveno, Jr.  
Sgt Alvin L. Lewis  
Pfc George J. Licitra  
2d Lt Melvin E. Lindgren  
Sgt Edward P. Lindner  
Pvt Richard G. Lockwood  
S/Sgt George Loveland

Pvt James S. Lovell  
1st Lt Henry A. Lowrance  
Pfc Clarence R. Mackey  
Pfc William W. Macray  
Pvt G. B. Marshall  
Pvt Edward F. Martin  
Pvt Paul I. Martin, Jr.  
Pfc Eladio Martinez  
Pfc Charles L. Mason  
Sgt Daniel R. McFain  
Pfc John G. McGowan  
Pfc Gren McInelly  
Pfc Orville McIntire  
Sgt James R. McKane  
T/5 Joseph H. McQuaid  
Pfc Claude R. Mendoza  
Sgt Felix G. Mendralla  
Sgt Bernard W. Meyer  
1st Lt David B. Miles  
Pfc Adolfo A. Montoya  
S Sgt Edwin E. Morisoli  
Pvt Harry E. Moser  
Pvt Nick P. Mraovich  
Pfc Walter J. Nawoj  
Pvt Jesse M. Neeley  
Pfc Robert R. Nelson  
Pfc Irving S. Nepkin  
S Sgt Gerald E. Obenauf  
T Sgt Joseph S. O'Donnell  
Pfc Joseph E. O'Heron  
S Sgt Leo L. Olson  
Pfc Louis P. Page  
T Sgt John Pedersen  
Pfc Thomas J. Pianovski  
Pfc Walter E. Pool  
Pfc John O. Powe  
S Sgt Edgar J. Pruitt  
Pfc Frank E. Raczkowski  
Pfc Harold H. Rademacher  
S Sgt Allen W. Rand  
Pvt Huey Raphael  
Pfc Robert W. Reid  
S Sgt Phil Reilly  
Pfc Curtis L. Reynolds  
Pfc Lawrence M. Rich  
Pvt LeRoy H. Richards  
Pfc Hugh P. Roche  
Pfc Max Rockman  
Pfc Wilbur Rogers

Pfc Roy H. Rome  
S/Sgt John H. Rouse  
Pfc Clarence P. Roy  
S/Sgt Robert F. Rucker  
Pfc Lawrence J. Rugotzke  
Pvt Andrew Rzeznik  
Sgt Noel J. Savard  
S/Sgt Sam J. Scavuzzo  
Pvt Henry O. Schumacher  
Pfc Michael A. Schuster  
Pfc Walter Schwardtfeger  
1st Lt Clarence K. Scott  
Sgt Walter E. Shadley  
Sgt Richard E. Shaw  
S/Sgt John I. Shelkey  
Pfc Warren G. Sides  
Pfc Harvey A. Sikes  
Pfc Floyd S. Sluss  
Pfc Joseph D. Smith  
Pvt Jasper L. Spidell  
S/Sgt John M. Spudich  
S/Sgt Adolph Stebe  
Pvt Walter T. Stevens  
Pvt Edward L. Stilwell  
Capt Sheldon O. Suess  
Pfc Franklin Sullivan  
Pfc William A. Sweatland  
Pfc Fred L. Swinnerton  
Pfc Toralf Tasta  
Pfc Anthony Tavalacci  
Major Ivan L. Taylor  
Pfc William Taylor  
Pfc Jose C. Tenorio  
Pvt Nathaniel Thomas  
Pfc Walter P. Timm  
Pfc William A. Tonne  
Pfc Clifford W. Torgerson  
Pfc Everett E. Tracey  
Sgt Ayzel Traver  
S Sgt Joseph Twork  
Pfc Marion W. Urban  
Pfc John H. Valdez  
S Sgt Donald Van Der Poppen  
Pfc Lee Vorpahl  
Sgt Waldemar W. Walk  
Pfc Elmer T. Waller  
Pvt Henry H. Walters  
Pfc Willard M. Ward  
T Sgt Emil B. Weber

Pvt Kenneth W. Wentworth	<i>210th Field Artillery Battalion</i>
Pfc Theodore W. Wenzel	Sgt Raymond T. Groot
Sgt Arthur W. Westerberg	Pfc Edward A. Partenski
Pfc Walter E. Wiatrowski	Lt Col Thomas Truxtun
Capt Stanley E. Wicher	
Pfc Ray D. Williams	<i>33d Reconnaissance Troop</i>
Pfc Alfred Wise	2d Lt Walter J. Barlag
Pfc Wallace Wooton	Pfc Kenneth E. Campaign
Sgt Joseph J. Wujcik	Cpl David E. Francis
Pfc Dean A. Yockey	S/Sgt Paul R. Crube
Pfc William Young	Pfc Harry Litke
Pvt Harry H. Zahradnicek	Pfc Robert W. Staples
 <i>122d Field Artillery Battalion</i>	
Capt Perry T. Jones	<i>108th Engineer Combat Battalion</i>
 <i>124th Field Artillery Battalion</i>	2d Lt Garfield E. Anderson
T/5 Ewell D. Cantrell	S/Sgt Charles E. Howard
Sgt William Hinkens	
Pvt George B. Loadwick	<i>108th Medical Battalion</i>
T/5 Charles Long	Pfc William J. Nosal
S/Sgt Kenneth T. Madsen	
Sgt Ernest W. Nielsen	<i>33d Quartermaster Company</i>
Cpl Oliver F. Schneider	S/Sgt William R. Green
	Sgt Grover Knox



### MEDAL OF HONOR

Sgt Dexter J. Kerstetter

Sgt John R. McKinney

*S/Sgt Howard E. Woodford<sup>1</sup>*



### DISTINGUISHED SERVICE CROSS

*T/Sgt Edwin J. Algar*

*Pfc Daniel D. Barron*

S/Sgt John A. Benbow

S/Sgt Joseph Boreyko

Pfc Bush H. Chancey

Sgt Herbert B. Clayton

*Pfc Raymond H. Collins*

Pfc Howard E. Cooper

S/Sgt Urban J. Dykstra

Sgt Joseph O. Emery

Pfc Vernon H. Fairchild

*1st Lt James E. Finn*

*Pfc Bernard F. Grimmeke*

*T/5 Albert P. Hays*

*Pfc John P. Hegarty*

Pfc Ernest E. Hunter

Lt Col Ernest D. Jessup

T/Sgt Harry G. Kepford

*1st Lt Robert R. Kimball*

*Cpl Robert O. Kopplin*

*S/Sgt Alphonsus L. Leary*

*Pfc Burton J. Lee*

*2nd Lt Melvin E. Lindgren*

Sgt Julius B. Olsen

Pfc Joseph Papez, Jr.

S/Sgt William E. Pavlick

Pfc Howard K. Robbins

Pfc George W. Rollins

*Pfc Clarence Schmidt*

*1st Lt Joseph H. Schneider*

Pfc Willis Smith

Pfc Ralph E. Snell

*1st Lt Lorne R. Stanley*

*T/Sgt Paul D. Sterling*

*Capt Sheldon O. Suess*

S/Sgt William E. Warren

*Pfc Doneirvon L. Weeks*

*T/Sgt Charles L. Whitlock*

Capt Sanford H. Winston

<sup>1</sup>Names printed in *italic* indicate posthumous award.



DISTINGUISHED SERVICE MEDAL.

Maj Gen P. W. Clarkson ★



SILVER STAR

Pfc Frank Abbinanti  
Pfc John C. Adams  
T/Sgt Thomas Alambis  
T/Sgt James A. Alexander  
Pfc Carl W. Allbritton  
1st Sgt James E. Allen  
S/Sgt Nelson J. Alleshouse  
S/Sgt Matildo M. Alvarado  
Sgt Frank S. Amaru  
*2d Lt Garfield E. Anderson*  
Pfc Julian Aranburu  
Pfc Joseph J. Azarone  
*T/Sgt Howard A. Backs*  
Sgt Kenneth Baker  
*Major Bob Balch*  
Pfc Walter J. Balewicz  
S/Sgt Frank F. Barbero  
Pfc Delbert Barnes  
T/Sgt Joseph D. Barrett  
1st Lt Levon G. Baxter  
S/Sgt Daniel F. Bearman  
Major Leonard H. Beechinor  
1st Lt Charles E. Bennett  
Sgt Everett L. Beucherie  
Sgt Raymond R. Bilotti  
Lt Col Ellis D. Blake  
1st Lt Paul E. Boinay

*Sgt Raymond Bolhouse*  
1st Lt Joseph W. Bollock  
Sgt John J. Boomer  
Major Richard F. Bortz  
Pfc Billie B. Boyd  
Pfc Frederick A. Brandel  
Pfc Victor J. Bregi  
1st Lt William N. Brisley  
Pfc Christopher Brown  
Capt James L. Brown  
Pfc James L. Bruce  
*1st Lt Joseph H. Bunch*  
*Pfc Wilbert T. Burns*  
Capt Saul Burten  
Pfc J. D. Caldwell  
Cpl James W. Calhoun  
*Pfc Padraig J. Calnan*  
1st Lt George W. Campbell  
Cpl Ewell D. Cantrell  
Pfc Carl Capps  
Cpl Keith E. Carr  
*1st Lt Frank L. Cary*  
Pfc Howard D. Caughron  
Col Ray E. Cavenee ★  
Pfc Louis A. Cetrone  
Sgt Michael Chalachan, Jr.  
Sgt Paul R. Champlain

<sup>1</sup>Names printed in *italic* indicate posthumous award.

★ Oak Leaf Cluster to award.



1st Sgt Dale Cheeley  
 S/Sgt Frank D. Chiocco  
 Pfc Trinidad Cirilo  
 Pfc George E. Citko  
 Maj Gen P. W. Clarkson ★  
 Pfc Cecil Clayborn  
 T/Sgt John G. Cline  
 Lt Col Charles F. Coates  
 1st Sgt Orville W. Colby  
 1st Lt John J. Coleman  
 Col Arthur S. Collins, Jr.  
 T/Sgt Lawrence H. Collins  
 Major Robert V. Connolly  
 1st Lt William M. Cook  
 S/Sgt Ethel E. Cooper  
 Capt Albert E. Corpening  
 T/Sgt Salvador Cortez  
 Sgt George E. Countryman  
 Sgt Harold L. Covey  
 2d Lt Neal A. Cowin  
 Sgt Charles E. Cox  
 Pfc Don H. Crandall  
 S/Sgt Donald O. Creed  
 S/Sgt Robert J. Cregeur  
 S/Sgt John J. Csaszar  
 S/Sgt Edmund Cucchi  
 Cpl Bartholomew J. Daly  
 S/Sgt John P. Daly  
 Cpl Verble F. Daniels  
 Pfc Frank Dautista  
 Pvt Bennett D. Davenport  
 S/Sgt Donald J. Davidson  
 Sgt Melvin J. Davis  
 Pfc Lloyd W. Day  
 Cpl Raymond H. DeBacker  
 Sgt Grover C. DeBruce  
 Pfc John J. Defalco  
 Capt William F. Dellinger  
 Sgt Hurson P. De Nolf  
 Chaplain (Capt) Gerald D. Desmond  
 Pfc Lawrence W. DeWall  
 T/Sgt Carl E. Dick  
 Pfc Anthony Dimuccio  
 Sgt Alphonso H. DiNunzio  
 Sgt Clarence J. Dirschell  
 Pfc Edward J. Domanski  
 1st Lt George E. Donaldson

1st Lt Robert B. Donaldson  
 Pfc Christopher Dorsey  
 Cpl Horace N. Dotson  
 Lt Col Stephen W. Downey  
 Sgt James F. Drennan  
 S/Sgt Leo J. Droege  
 Pfc Edward C. Dunn  
 1st Lt John H. Dunn  
 1st Lt Gerald L. Dunning  
 1st Lt John L. Durant  
 Pfc Forest G. Eaken  
 1st Lt James E. Early  
 Pfc Richard F. Eccles  
 1st Lt Herbert R. Eder  
 Sgt John T. Edwards  
 T/Sgt Kenneth J. Edwards  
 Lt Col Milton Ehrlich  
 Pfc Erick G. Ellison  
 Cpl Robert M. Elzy  
 Pfc Walter R. Eriksen  
 Pfc Lawrence E. Esterly  
 Pfc Oran B. Ferguson  
 Pfc Vincent A. Fertitta  
 Sgt Graydon M. Fink  
 T/Sgt Edwin E. Flanagan  
 Sgt Joseph H. Flannigan  
 1st Lt James L. Fleming  
 1st Lt Orville W. Fleming  
 Pfc Raymond J. Flynn  
 Pfc James Fong  
 Pfc Joseph Fovenyes  
 Pfc Herman Fox  
 Pfc Richard L. Franklin  
 Pfc Herbert L. Frederickson  
 Pfc Edwin C. Fritz  
 Pfc Chester C. Gall  
 Cpl John Gallo  
 Pfc Louis Galvan  
 Sgt Martin H. Garland  
 Sgt Edwin L. Garnier  
 Sgt Haskell M. Garrett  
 1st Lt James M. Garrity  
 Pfc Carlos Garza  
 Sgt George Gatto  
 Pfc Albert Geoit  
 S/Sgt Raymond T. Gibson  
 Cpl Frank E. Gillespie

<sup>1</sup>Names printed in *italic* indicate posthumous award.

★ Oak Leaf Cluster to award.

S/Sgt Charles E. Goodwin  
 S/Sgt Oliver E. Green  
 S/Sgt Winfield R. Green  
 S/Sgt Erwin W. Griesbach  
 T/Sgt Richard E. Griffith  
 S/Sgt Charles J. Grosso  
 Pfc Walter J. Grzesiakowski  
 Pfc Alfred N. Guerrera  
 S/Sgt Franklin P. Gunion  
 S/Sgt Lester W. Gwinn ★  
 T/Sgt Erdmann E. Haase  
 Sgt Glendon D. Hackney  
 2d Lt Robert F. Haglund  
 T/Sgt Tony C. Hails  
 1st Lt Eugene D. Hanneman  
 1st Lt Samuel B. Harbison  
 S/Sgt Lester G. Hardiek  
 1st Lt Wilbur W. Harding  
 1st Lt William S. Harris  
 1st Lt James R. Harrison  
 S/Sgt Louis Haszu  
 Pfc Richard D. Harwood  
 Cpl Louis L. Hatfield  
 Lt Col William M. Haycock  
 Sgt Richard A. Hayes, Jr.  
 Sgt Chester I. Heeter, Jr.  
 Pfc John W. Hennessy  
 Capt Elber J. Hicks  
 Pfc James Higgins, Jr.  
 Pfc Willos E. Hill  
 Lt Col James W. Hilton ★  
 S/Sgt Albert A. Hoelscher  
 Pfc Verne L. Hoffman  
 1st Lt Frederick G. Hoffmann  
 1st Lt William J. Hoge  
 Pfc Glenn C. Holtz  
 S/Sgt Donald Holwerda  
 Sgt Lloyd A. Hooper  
 S/Sgt Clyde C. Hoover  
 S/Sgt Charles E. Howard  
 Pfc Norman D. Hubbard  
 1st Lt William B. Hubbert  
 2d Lt Edward J. Hughes  
 Lt Col Milan H. Hulbert, Jr.  
 Sgt Bill Huri  
 Capt Edmund C. Hurlbutt  
 Pfc John A. Hyatt

T/Sgt Graham B. Irish  
 2d Lt Harold C. Jackson  
 S/Sgt William H. Jacobs  
 Lt Col Ernest D. Jessup  
 1st Lt William B. Jewitt  
 Capt Perry T. Jones  
 Lt Col Francis P. Kane  
 Pfc Ralph L. Kapchinske  
 Sgt Athanastos Kapetaneas  
 Pfc Willard H. Keith  
 Capt Patrick H. Kelly  
 Capt Alan J. Kennedy  
 T/Sgt Harry G. Kepford  
 1st Lt Raymond C. Kerns  
 T/Sgt Kenneth J. Kessel  
 Pfc R. J. Kessler  
 S/Sgt Kenneth J. Kircher  
 1st Lt Keith F. Kirkbride  
 Pfc William M. Kirschner  
 Capt Cyril C. Kissel  
 Pfc Michael J. Klimczak  
 2d Lt Joseph E. Kmiecik  
 S/Sgt Stewart Knight  
 Cpl Willis R. Knisely  
 Pfc Bronislaus F. Koski  
 S/Sgt Donald W. Kottmeyer  
 Pvt Adam J. Kovaluskie  
 Sgt Willie E. Kovar  
 Pfc Peter Krainichyn  
 1st Lt Carl H. Krats  
 Pfc Jerome O. Kroeger  
 S/Sgt Joseph J. Krumpak  
 Sgt Stanley J. Krypciak  
 Sgt Isadore A. Krzyewski  
 Pfc R. D. Kuhn  
 Cpl Alex J. Kuklok  
 1st Lt Joseph J. Kutys  
 Pfc William F. La Buda  
 Pfc William B. Lachenauer  
 Capt Reggie J. Laird  
 2d Lt Murray E. Lamb  
 Pfc Anthony L. Lange  
 Pfc Harvey E. Lange  
 1st Lt Kenneth M. Lanman  
 Sgt Willis E. Lay  
 Cpl John Lexniewski  
 S/Sgt John L. Lesz

<sup>1</sup>Names printed in *italic* indicate posthumous award.

★ Oak Leaf Cluster to award.

S/Sgt Willard J. Liden  
 S/Sgt James J. Lindquist  
 Capt George L. Lindsay  
 Pfc Carlos A. Lindsey  
 2d Lt Ray Livengood  
 T/Sgt Eugene C. Lobodzinski  
*Pfc Charles Lockhart*  
 T/Sgt James A. Lockhart  
 T/Sgt Raymond Lollis  
 Pfc George H. Lomalie  
 Pfc Edward R. Lorek  
 S/Sgt Donald G. Lowe  
*1st Lt Henry A. Lowrance*  
 Pfc Ollie J. Lozano  
 Pfc John Luca  
 S/Sgt Francis J. Lueneburg  
 Capt Frederick J. Lund  
 S/Sgt Peter R. Lupo  
*T/Sgt Nicholas J. Lutzie*  
*Pfc Ernest L. Lynch*  
 Pfc Jack W. MacInnes  
*Pfc Clarence R. Mackey*  
 Pfc Jack B. Magee  
 Pfc John A. Mancine  
 Capt Marinos G. Maniatty  
 1st Lt Tilden T. Manzer  
 Capt Marin L. Marchant  
 Chaplain (Capt) Arthur H. Marsh  
 Cpl Howard A. Marshall  
 Cpl Albert F. Martin  
 1st Lt Dwight C. Martin  
*Pfc Edward A. Martin*  
 Pfc Raymond Martinez  
 Capt Alfred P. Massoud  
 1st Lt Arthur B. Mathies ★  
 Pfc Stephen F. Mayer  
 T/Sgt Marshall M. Mayes  
 Sgt William McAdam  
 1st Lt Lewis S. McAnally  
 Col Andrew T. McAnsh  
 S/Sgt Welland M. McCalla  
 S/Sgt Frederick F. McClain  
*Pfc Gren McInelly*  
*Sgt James R. McKane*  
 S/Sgt William M. Mead  
 Sgt Samuel Meangwie  
*Sgt Noah Meeler*

Sgt Warren P. Melvin  
 Pfc Frederick T. Mendenhall  
*Sgt Felix G. Mendralla*  
 Pfc Arthur B. Merrill  
 S/Sgt Francis E. Meyer  
 Pfc Anton J. Micklonis  
*1st Lt David B. Miles*  
 Sgt Lloyd O. Miller  
 Major William L. Mills  
 Lt Col Orville Minton  
*S/Sgt Delos W. Mitchell*  
 Cpl Ikey B. Mitchell  
 S/Sgt Leonard F. Mock  
 1st Lt John M. Molberg  
 Pfc Joe Moore  
 Pfc Theodore O. Moore  
 Pfc Walter C. Moore  
 Pfc Walter E. Morgan  
 Pfc James J. Moriarity  
 S/Sgt Theo A. Morris  
 Pfc Lawrence J. Morrison  
 Pfc Charles L. Morse  
 Sgt John M. Morton  
 Capt Dwight Mossman  
*Pfc Robert P. Moyer*  
*Pfc George E. Memmey*  
 S/Sgt James C. Murphy  
 S/Sgt Michael W. Murphy  
 S/Sgt Paul S. Murray  
 S/Sgt Jeffie W. Muskrat  
 Brig Gen Donald J. Myers  
 Pvt Edgar Myers  
 Pfc Edward G. Mysliviec  
*S/Sgt Warren E. Nebmer*  
 Pfc John J. Nelson  
 Sgt Leroy Nix  
 Pfc Malcolm Nolen  
 Capt Bernard W. Nussbaum  
 S/Sgt Gerald E. Obenauf  
*T/Sgt Joseph S. O'Donnell*  
 S/Sgt Leo L. Olson  
 Sgt Harry J. Oswald  
 T/Sgt John Ott  
 Cpl Sebastian Pagan  
 1st Lt Cannon F. Page  
 Pfc Steven J. Palfey  
 Pfc Robert E. Pechous

<sup>1</sup>Names printed in *italic* indicate posthumous award.

★ Oak Leaf Cluster to award.

Sgt Frank Pelak  
 Pfc Anthony Perosa  
*S/Sgt Elmer F. Peterson*  
 2d Lt Edward A. Petrowski  
 Sgt Nicholas Phillip  
 1st Lt Ellis H. Pickett  
 Pfc Charles J. Piecha  
 Pfc Robert J. Pieper  
*Sgt Clifford E. Pinney*  
*Pfc Rolland E. Plattner*  
*Pfc Herbert T. Pledger*  
 T/Sgt Lincoln Plum  
 Cpl Lavern Plummer  
*Sgt Fred J. Povolish*  
 Pfc Wylie A. Prather  
 Pfc James W. Presley  
 Pfc Richard H. Prince  
 S/Sgt John A. Queram  
 T/Sgt Lynn W. Quick  
 1st Lt Dale R. Quinn ★  
 Sgt Albert J. Rahkola  
*S/Sgt Edward G. Rajknecht*  
*S/Sgt Allen W. Rand*  
*1st Lt John F. Reardon*  
 Pfc John W. Reeds  
 S/Sgt Carl Reinstein  
 Sgt Victor W. Renner  
 S/Sgt Joseph J. Resciniti  
*Capt Vernon G. Rexroat*  
*Pfc Lawrence M. Rich*  
*Pvt LeRoy H. Richards*  
 Sgt Allan P. Richert  
 T/Sgt Louis E. Rizzo  
 2d Lt Bartley E. Robbins  
 T/Sgt Joseph P. Robinson  
 Pfc Tellesforo T. Rodriguez  
 Pfc Elmo B. Rogers  
 Pfc Jose C. Romero  
 S/Sgt Joseph A. Rosenbarski  
 T/Sgt Milo J. Rose  
 1st Lt Paul W. Rothschild  
 Sgt Leonard W. Rouland  
 Pfc Theodore R. Rowe  
 2d Lt Wallace A. Rowe  
 Capt Otis B. Rowland  
 Pfc Merle V. Roy  
 1st Lt Theodore E. Rozen

Major Barry A. Ryan  
 Pfc Francis Ryan  
*S/Sgt Robert F. Rucker*  
 Cpl Walter W. Rudisell  
 Pfc Charles C. Runik  
 Pfc Doffice D. Rushing  
 Pfc Louis Rzepka  
 Col Frank J. Sackton  
 S/Sgt Peter P. Sarkis  
 Lt Col Arthur T. Sauser  
 Pfc William O. Schill  
 S/Sgt Roman J. Schindler  
 Sgt William A. Schmuelling  
 S/Sgt Melvin L. Schomas  
 Pfc Werner E. Schoninger  
*Pfc Ernest Schramm*  
 Pfc Arthur A. Seidel  
 Pfc Nick Senyszyn  
 Col Paul C. Serff  
 2d Lt Leonard L. Sharp  
 Pfc Merrill C. Sharp  
 Sgt Cyril H. Sharpe  
 1st Lt Felix L. Sharpe  
 Capt Joseph H. Sherrard ★  
 1st Lt Raymond F. Shirtz  
 1st Lt Severance A. Sill  
 1st Lt Irving Silverhart  
 Pfc Edmund S. Slominsky  
 Sgt Harold P. Smith  
 1st Lt Harry G. Smith  
 Pfc Robert E. Smith  
 S/Sgt Peter Smolek  
 Pfc Herschel B. Snapp  
 Pfc Lewis C. Snow  
 2d Lt William L. Spafford  
 T/Sgt Albert L. Spencer  
 1st Lt Charles D. Spendlove  
 1st Lt Charles F. Stein  
*Cpl Lloyd R. Stenerson*  
 1st Lt Tom L. Stephens  
 Pfc Fred Stoakin  
 2d Lt Harry W. Stonecipher  
 Capt Robert B. Straight  
 S/Sgt Merle J. Strickler  
 Cpl Edward T. Swartz  
 1st Lt William R. Swift  
 Major Charlie Y. Talbott, Sr.

<sup>1</sup>Names printed in *italic* indicate posthumous award.

★ Oak Leaf Cluster to award.

S/Sgt Nelson S. Tate  
 Capt Herbert H. Taylor, Jr.  
*Major Ivan L. Taylor*  
 Cpl Carl E. Teel  
 T/Sgt Anthony Tete  
*Pfc Hollis H. Thaxton*  
 Pfc Henry J. Thilking  
 S/Sgt George E. Thompson  
 Sgt Lawrence C. Thompson  
*Pfc Robert L. Thompson*  
 Pfc Woodrow W. Thompson  
*Sgt Luther J. Thornton* ★  
*Pfc William A. Tonne*  
 Pfc Maynard L. Trotterchaud  
 1st Lt George G. True  
*Lt Col Thomas Truxtun*  
 T/Sgt James A. Tucker  
*S/Sgt Joseph Twork*  
 1st Lt John M. Uffelmann  
 Capt Gerard A. Unrein  
*Pfc Marion W. Urban*  
 1st Lt Raymond R. Utke  
 Pfc Jack W. Vandiver  
 S/Sgt Julian H. Van Durmen  
 Pfc Walter C. Varner  
 1st Lt Richard W. Vernon  
 1st Lt Dolman W. Vineyard  
 Pfc Rocco Viscito  
 Pfc Roland F. Voigt  
 Sgt Shirley R. Voreis  
 2d Lt Edwin F. Voss  
 2d Lt Frank C. Vrana  
*Pfc Bennie Wagner*  
 Pfc Harold G. Wagner  
 Cpl Jack P. Wagner  
 Sgt Donald A. Ward

T/Sgt Frank E. Wargai  
 S/Sgt Julius Wargo  
 Sgt Carl A. Warner  
 Pfc Edmund B. Warner  
 T/Sgt Walter W. Warwick  
 Pfc Earl W. Watson  
 Capt Robert J. Watt  
*S/Sgt Paul I. Wegman*  
 T/Sgt Victor J. Wendling  
*Pfc Theodore W. Wenzel*  
 Sgt Roman L. Wesolowski  
*Sgt Arthur W. Westerberg*  
 1st Lt Thomas R. Wheeler  
 Pfc Donald R. Whetung  
 Pfc William C. White  
 Cpl Charles A. Willett  
*Pfc Ray D. Williams*  
 Pfc Eugene G. Wilson  
 S/Sgt Kenneth E. Wilson  
 Cpl Miner Wilson  
 Cpl Joseph Winiarski  
*1st Lt John A. Winkler*  
 Pfc Ray L. Winn  
 Capt Sanford H. Winston  
 Sgt Melvin E. Wiseman  
 Pfc Casimer J. Wojciechowski  
 Sgt H. M. Wood  
 1st Lt Horace G. Woodbury, Jr.  
 S/Sgt William A. Wolf  
 Lt Col Sanford I. Wolff  
 Capt Clifton W. Woolley  
*Pfc Walter E. Workman*  
 T/Sgt Peter T. Zaleskas  
 Pfc Ezequiel C. Zamora  
 S/Sgt Walter J. Zarkowski  
 Pfc Walter G. Ziolkowski

<sup>1</sup>Names printed in *italic* indicate posthumous award.

★ Oak Leaf Cluster to award.



## LEGION OF MERIT

2nd Lt George Anderson  
Lt Col Jacob M. Arvey  
Lt Col Ernest H. Bauman  
Major Joffre H. Boston  
Lt Col Roland P. Carlson  
Capt Stan W. Carlson  
Col Ray E. Cavenee ★  
Maj Gen P. W. Clarkson  
Col Arthur S. Collins, Jr. ★  
Major Robert V. Connolly  
Col Carleton Coulter, Jr.  
Major James Cregg  
Lt Col William T. Delihant  
Lt Col Stephen W. Downey ★  
Lt Col James B. Faulconer  
Capt Norman Garling  
Lt Col William M. Haycock  
Lt Col Leslie R. Ireland  
Major George A. Jenkins, Jr.  
Lt Col Francis P. Kane  
Lt Col William N. Kleinman

Lt Col Russell K. Kuhns  
Col Ralph MacDonald  
Col Andrew T. McAnsh ★  
Major Anthony E. Meehl  
Brig Gen Donald J. Myers  
Lt Col Eli J. Paris  
Brig Gen Alexander G. Paxton  
1st Lt Jack Roach  
Lt Col William J. Rogers  
Col Frank J. Sackton ★  
Major Edgar S. Sanders  
Capt George Schless  
Col Paul C. Serff ★  
Lt Col Frank S. Singer  
Major Thomas F. Smart  
Lt Col Durand Smith  
Lt Col Anthony J. Strak  
Major Edward F. Vonesh  
Lt Col Ralph Wagner  
Sgt Paul Ward  
Major Ransom Yonce

★ Oak Leaf Cluster to award.





## AIR MEDAL

1st Lt Vincent Allegrini  
1st Lt Levon G. Baxter  
Major Richard F. Bortz  
Major Joffre H. Boston  
1st Lt William N. Brisley  
Lt Col Roland P. Carlson  
Col Ray E. Cavenee  
Maj Gen P. W. Clarkson  
Col Arthur S. Collins, Jr.  
Capt Joseph Dain, Jr.  
1st Lt George E. Donaldson  
1st Lt Herbert R. Eder  
Major John M. Farnell  
Major Frank W. Flood  
Cpl Edward J. Freegard  
1st Lt Paul J. Giudice, Jr.  
T/Sgt Michael T. Griffin  
Lt Col William M. Haycock  
1st Lt Frederick G. Hoffmann  
Pfc William J. Horler

Capt Elmer A. Horvath  
1st Lt John J. Johnson  
1st Lt Raymond C. Kerns  
Col Ralph MacDonald  
1st Lt Michael Magri  
Col Andrew T. McAnsh  
1st Lt Archie Means  
Capt William R. Morgan  
S/Sgt Howard Morris  
Capt Dwight Mossman  
1st Lt Marvin L. Murphy  
1st Lt Ellis H. Pickett  
Capt Richard J. Rawlings, Jr.  
Cpl Roland F. Robinson  
Col Frank J. Sackton  
Capt Orvall O. Shotwell  
1st Lt Charles D. Spendlove  
1st Lt Lorne R. Stanley  
1st Lt William C. Swift  
1st Lt Dolman W. Vineyard

## Distinguished Unit Citations

The *108th Engineer Combat Battalion* is cited for outstanding performance of duty in action against the enemy in Northern Luzon, Philippine Islands, from 19 February to 1 May 1945. Question Mark Hill and Bench Mark Hill, vital points commanding the Pozorubbio-Rosario Highway, taken by our infantry after fierce fighting and heavy casualties, were in imminent danger of being lost because of the extreme difficulty of supply. Engineer troops, working under enemy artillery, mortar, and small-arms fire, supplied the infantry with water by hand carry over a 7-hour long, tortuous mountain trail and constructed a supply road rising 800 feet in a distance of 2 miles over narrow hogback ridges that dropped precipitously 300 to 500 feet at many places. To support a wide envelopment, another 3-mile road was pushed under enemy fire from Alibeng to Hill 1802, an elevation of 1,600 feet. In the next phase of the campaign, constantly harassed by enemy infiltration attacks by night and artillery and sniper fire by day, a 10-mile supply road was built from Rosario to Pugo. Working in advance of the infantry, the bridges of the Agoo-Pugo Road were opened and mine fields removed, enabling the infantry to make a surprise advance in force from positions many miles to the rear. To support one prong of the attack on Baguio, a road was necessary from Pugo to Tuba. Although advised by higher headquarters that road construction over the mountains in that area was impossible, engineer reconnaissance patrols were operated deep into enemy territory, a road surveyed and pushed to an elevation of 4,400 feet in a distance of 8 miles, despite numerous enemy suicide patrol attacks to destroy road building equipment. Meanwhile, to support the advance toward Baguio along the coastal route, engineers cleared the road and repaired the bridges north of Aringay. Under cover of darkness and while the infantry enveloped the town of Bauang from the west, an engineer detachment removed enemy demolitions from two 640-foot spans across the Bauang River and seized and held the bridges against enemy resistance. The division front was now extended from San Fernando to San Manuel, a distance of 65 miles. To prevent an enemy salient, our troops had to be moved from Caba to Galiano under observation of the enemy holding the Naguilian Road and Bilbil Mountain to the north. Despite almost nightly enemy attacks, the 13 miles of road were constructed in 15 days over the most difficult terrain. Meanwhile, other elements of the *108th Engineer Combat Battalion* in a move to open up the tortuous and canalized Kennon Road, against determined and continuous enemy resistance and frequently without any friendly infantry support, destroyed enemy strong points commanding mine fields, removed the mines, and repaired bridges under cover of supporting fires provided by themselves. These and the many other roads built and repaired by the *108th Engineer Combat Battalion* were vital supply roads capable of sustaining division loads and enabling the supply and evacuation incident to an operation of a reinforced division. While contributing so enormously to the winning of the battle of supply, the engineers continued to perform other engineer functions, which were complicated and increased because of the great length of division front and rapidity of advance. The outstanding performance of duty and the bold, vigorous and aggressive action displayed by the personnel of the *108th Engineer Combat Battalion*, in the face of seemingly insurmountable difficulties, presented an inspiring example to other units of the division, exemplified their deep devotion to duty, and are in keeping with the highest traditions of the Corps of Engineers and the United

States Army. (General Orders 315, Headquarters 33d Infantry Division, 24 October 1945, as approved by the Commander in Chief, United States Army Forces, Pacific.)

*Company F, 123d Infantry Regiment*, is cited for outstanding performance of duty in action against the enemy on Northern Luzon, Philippine Islands. On 22 April 1945, *Company F, 123d Infantry Regiment*, was assigned the mission of attacking and seizing a high rugged ridge approximately 1,500 yards north of Mt. Lomboy, Mountain Province, Northern Luzon, Philippine Islands. This ridge provided the enemy with a key defensive position on the road to Baguio, and was so located as to place the enemy in a position which enabled them to cut the supply lines of our advancing regiment. Moving out of its position on Mt. Calugong, the men of *Company F* advanced their way up and down steep slopes and cliffs. By noon, the men were near exhaustion, water was nearly gone, and there was no means of resupply. At this point, *Company F* began to encounter enemy resistance, which increased with mounting ferocity as our troops drew closer to the enemy position. Approximately one-third of the company had become casualties from enemy fire. Realizing the supreme importance of their mission, the men of *Company F* refused to give up and they gallantly continued pushing on toward their objective. With the knowledge of no artillery support available, because of failure of communications, the men of *Company F*, completely exhausted, pushed to within 300 yards of their objective. Closing with the enemy, the men of *Company F* completely annihilated the enemy and seized the ridge. That night at 2200, the full fury and power of the Japanese were again turned on *Company F*, when the enemy launched a vicious counterattack on the company position, and, killing or wounding all our men on the north side of the company's perimeter, succeeded in penetrating our positions. Men rushed from other sections of the perimeter to attempt to fill the gap and, after 3 hours of the bitterest fighting, the enemy was annihilated. Throughout the remainder of the night, the gallant men of *Company F* clung tenaciously to their positions, despite continued attacks by the enemy. In the morning, the tired men arose from their foxholes and, in a final concerted effort, wiped out the remaining enemy in the areas, thus reopening the supply lines of the adjacent regiment. The determination, unflinching devotion to duty, and superb courage displayed by each man of *Company F, 123d Infantry Regiment*, contributed immeasurably to the success of operations in Northern Luzon and are in keeping with the highest traditions of the armed forces of the United States. (General Orders 358, Headquarters 33d Infantry Division, 18 December 1945.)

*Company G, 123d Infantry Regiment*, is cited for outstanding performance of duty in action against the enemy during the period 23 to 25 April 1945 on Northern Luzon, Philippine Islands. On 23 April 1945 under a sweltering sun, *Company G, 123d Infantry Regiment*, began its tortuous battle up the steep slopes of Hill 4900. At approximately one-third of the distance to the top, the company encountered intense enemy fire. Although suffering casualties, the tired fighting men of *Company G* fought on stubbornly, but were compelled ultimately to give ground. Withdrawing a short distance, a quick reorganization was effected and once again the men arose and moved forward to assault the

enemy position, but again they were halted by the fiercest type of resistance and were compelled to dig in. A reconnaissance revealed no other route to the objective so, on the following morning, although suffering heavy casualties from enemy fire, heat, exhaustion, and lack of sufficient food and water, *Company G* with grim determination, launched a third ferocious attack on the enemy position. With every man in the company fighting his way up the extremely narrow ridge, even though an alarming number of men became casualties, those remaining stubbornly continued the advance, and in a final concerted effort, routed the enemy and seized his positions. Having gained this initial advantage, the men refused to stop. After a hasty reorganization, *Company G* continued the fight and, with renewed vigor, the fatigued and weary men pushed on down the reverse slope of the hill, seizing the town of Tuba 1 day earlier than had been considered possible. Despite the fact that more than 50 percent of the company were casualties and the men were near the point of exhaustion from the sustained drive, intolerable heat, and the rugged terrain over which they fought, the remaining men of *Company G* without consideration of lack of rest, food, and water continued the attack and began the tortuous advance up Mt. Santo Tomas, towering 7,100 feet in the air. At about 1815 on 25 April 1945, the company encountered heavy enemy resistance. Undaunted by the intense enemy fire, *Company G* arose twice to assault the enemy positions, but unable to advance, the men were finally compelled to dig in. On the following morning after a long night of constant vigil, and of continuous harassment by the enemy, the weary and fatigued men moved once again toward their objective. Imbued with an utterly indomitable fighting spirit, they met the enemy and refused to be halted. Despite the heavy casualties suffered in the fiercest type of close-in fighting, the gallant fighting men of *Company G* continued on, completely wiping out an entire company, knocking out four machine guns and three knee mortars, penetrating the enemy positions, and then continuing on to seize the summit of the 7,100-foot peak, thus securing the right flank of the troops advancing on Baguio. The determination, unflinching devotion to duty, and superb courage displayed by each man of *Company G*, 123d Infantry Regiment, contributed immeasurably to the success of operations in Northern Luzon and are in keeping with the highest traditions of the armed forces of the United States. (General Orders 359, Headquarters 33d Infantry Division, 19 December 1945.)

*Company C*, 130th Infantry Regiment, is cited for outstanding performance of duty in armed conflict with the enemy. Bilbil Mountain, Mountain Province, Luzon, Philippine Islands, an extremely rugged forest-covered, key defensive position was occupied by a company of Japs reenforced with a heavy machine-gun section, a 90mm mortar section, and two sections (two guns) of 75mm howitzers. This commanding ground afforded excellent observation and enabled the enemy to maneuver its forces and supporting weapons to advantageous positions to repel successfully seven previous attempts to seize Hill X, the strategically important knob on the southwestern slope of Bilbil Mountain. Hill X was honey-combed with prepared positions from which the enemy observed and harassed our movements along the Galiano-Baguio Road. On April 12, 1945, *Company C*, under the sweltering sun, laboriously climbed the steep mountainous trail, following the crest of an extremely narrow hogback ridge which, except for

short cogon grass and sparse bamboo growths, was devoid of cover, and pushed to within 400 yards of the crest of Hill X where they were met by a heavy barrage of 90mm mortar fire which enveloped the entire ridge. Simultaneously, intense enemy machine-gun and rifle fire emanating from the many camouflaged spiderholes and caves astride the trail inflicted many casualties, forcing the company to dig in. A reconnaissance revealed no other route to the objective so the company evacuated its casualties and aggressively pressed against this seemingly impenetrable fortress throughout the day, making the enemy disclose his strong points. On 13 April 1945, despite the fact that the men were weary from the strenuous climb, fierce fighting, and constant watchfulness against night infiltration, the company launched a dawn attack. Undaunted by the intense fire which inflicted five casualties to the leading elements, the gallant fighting men of *Company C*, imbued with an indomitable fighting spirit, swiftly worked their way up the knifelike ridge and in the fiercest kind of close-in fighting wiped out six Jap machine-gun nests in succession, killing the defending Japs in their holes. The enemy fanatically contested with intense fire every foot of the way to the summit, but undismayed, *Company C* seized Hill X and dug in, tenaciously holding on despite continuous harassing fire delivered from the dominating positions on Bilbil Mountain. That night the Japs reenforced Bilbil Mountain and subjected *Company C* to repeated counterattacks. Another company sent to assist in the attack on Bilbil Mountain on 14 April 1945 succeeded in reaching the summit only to be driven off by a fierce Jap counter-attack. The full fury and power of the Japs were again turned on *Company C* which alone held its position, successfully repulsing all of the severe and determined counterattacks. The tired fighting men of *Company C* exhibiting unwavering fighting spirit, despite nearly 50 percent casualties, tenaciously held Hill X for 5 days until reenforcements were available to continue the attack and annihilate the enemy. In the accomplishment of this mission, the unflinching devotion to duty and superb courage displayed by each man of *Company C*, *130th Infantry Regiment*, reflect the highest traditions of the armed forces. (General Orders 159, Headquarters 33d Infantry Division, 5 July 1945, as approved by the Commander in Chief, United States Army Forces, Pacific.)

*Company K*, *130th Infantry Regiment*, is cited for outstanding performance of duty in action. Two high, rugged peaks in the vicinity of Cauringan Village, Pangasinan, Luzon, Philippine Islands, provided the Japanese with key defensive positions. *Company K* was given the mission of seizing Bench Mark Hill, which rose in a series of grassy and precipitous slopes to a height of 1,500 feet and was separated from the higher peak of Question Mark Hill by a sparsely wooded 600-yard draw. A Japanese company reinforced with automatic weapons and mortars was firmly entrenched in well camouflaged spiderholes, tunnels, and pillboxes fanatically defending Bench Mark Hill. On 19 February 1945, *Company K*, following close on the heels of an artillery barrage, began its up-hill battle up the exposed slopes of Bench Mark Hill toward the summit. In the fiercest kind of close-in fighting, *Company K* eliminated the determined Japs in their well camouflaged positions and succeeded in gaining control of the summit. After a quick reorganization *Company K* fought its way down the reverse slope, despite the intense enemy heavy machine-gun and mortar fire delivered from the commanding slopes of the Question Mark Hill, killing

the Japs in their prepared positions which honeycombed the entire reverse slope. On and around two small knobs on the reverse slope of Bench Mark Hill the Japanese had prepared their strongest defenses. It was these two fortified protuberances against which *Company K* was advancing. Undaunted by the intense enemy fire delivered from the dominating slopes of Question Mark Hill, *Company K* arose three times to assault these hillocks and close with the enemy. Despite the fact that more than half of the company were casualties and the men were weary and fatigued from the sustained fight, the heat of the day, and the rugged terrain over which they moved, the tired fighting men of *Company K* launched a final concerted attack which ended in the capture of both of the objectives. Digging in on the knolls, they tenaciously held their position against enemy counterattacks and heavy fire. For 4 days *Company K* beat off enemy counterattacks and fought the Japs at close quarters. So completely did the company contain the enemy and occupy his attention that our forces were able to flank and seize the key position of Question Mark Hill. The determination, courage, and fighting spirit of the men of *Company K*, *130th Infantry Regiment*, contributed immeasurably to the success of operations in Northern Luzon. (General Orders 144, Headquarters, 33d Infantry Division, 27 June 1945, as approved by the Commander in Chief, United States Army Forces, Pacific.)

*Company A*, *136th Infantry Regiment*, is cited for outstanding performance of duty in action against the enemy during the period 3 to 4 May 1945, in the vicinity of Tebbo, Nueva Viscaya Province, Northern Luzon, Philippine Islands. The company was a portion of a larger force assigned to occupy an important position on Skyline Ridge. This position commanded the approach to the position near Tebbo. At 0400, 3 May 1945, *Company A* began their movements up the open, razorback ridge, which led to the enemy stronghold. At 0600, they had gained a position from which they could attack. This barren ridge line offered little cover from the vicious fire of the enemy machine guns and mortars. About 2100, native carriers were dispatched to resupply them with ammunition, but when the carriers had nearly reached the position, enemy mortars opened up from concealed positions. The fire from these mortars covered the entire position held by *Company A*, causing several casualties. The barrage lifted and the enemy launched three consecutive Banzai attacks. All were repulsed by the gallant men of *Company A*. Later, carrying parties resupplied them with ammunition and, by early morning, they were organized for an attack upon the main objective. On 4 May 1945, the weary men of *Company A* hurled themselves upon the enemy with such ferocity that by mid-morning, the enemy stronghold was overrun. Sixty-nine enemy lay dead upon the position and several enemy light machine guns, mortars, and artillery were captured. The determination, unflinching devotion to duty, and superb courage displayed by each man of *Company A*, *136th Infantry Regiment*, contributed immeasurably to the success of operations in Northern Luzon and are in keeping with the highest traditions of the armed forces of the United States. (General Orders 6, Headquarters 33d Infantry Division, 6 January 1946.)

*Company F*, *136th Infantry Regiment*, is cited for outstanding performance of duty in action against the enemy during the period 9th April to 11th April 1945, on Northern Luzon, Philippine Islands. At 1600 on 9th April 1945,



*Company F* completed relief of a much larger unit in position on Skyline Ridge, Nueva Viscaya Province, Northern Luzon. The position was on a high, barren ridge, well out in advance of all other forces of the Regiment in that sector, and constituted the right flank of the Division. Three miles to the Southeast was the left flank of the adjacent Division. In front were strong forces of the enemy. *Company F* was still engaged in consolidating its new position when the enemy, who had been watching from adjacent heights, suddenly opened up with heavy machine-gun and mortar fire in preparation for an attack. Throughout the remaining daylight hours the men were pinned to their foxholes by the fierceness of the enemy fire. At nightfall, the company braced itself for the inevitable attack. At midnight the enemy struck on the right flank of the position. Although the men of *Company F* laid down a barrage of artillery, mortar, rifle and grenade fire, some of the fanatical enemy, attacking in superior numbers, succeeded in penetrating the position with light machine guns, fixed bayonets, grenades and demolitions. The attack continued with unabated fury throughout the night. Only as dawn came, were the men of *Company F*, by the toughest type of hand-to-hand fighting, and heavy supporting fires of friendly 81mm mortars and artillery, able to stop the attack and expel the enemy from the position. Many enemy had been killed, but as daylight came, it could be seen that the enemy had surrounded the position on all sides. Wire communications and supply lines had been cut and the company was completely isolated. The supply of food, water, ammunition, and especially grenades was nearly exhausted. The only means of resupply was by air. Although this means was utilized, many of the supplies fell into the hands of the surrounding enemy, and although the company did receive some water, small-arms and mortar ammunition, food and grenades were still lacking. Throughout the day, despite constant harassment by the enemy, the company labored in the sweltering heat to reorganize the position and prepare for further attacks. Reinforcements were ordered but the men knew that they must hold the vital position by themselves, until help could arrive. On several occasions, sorties were made to dislodge strong groups of enemy who had dug in near the flanks of the position. It was vital that these enemy be destroyed before nightfall, and with ferocious courage, small groups of *Company F* sallied forth and, so fierce were their attacks that in one of these sallies, thirty-two of a total enemy force of forty were killed in their positions, and the remaining eight were forced to flee. As night fell the company crouched in its foxholes awaiting the attack, outnumbered, but unafraid. At 0100 the blasting of grenades, mortars and demolitions covered the entire position. The enemy swarmed in, only to be met with withering fire of friendly artillery and mortars and the ready bayonets of the heroic defenders. Using every means of fighting at their disposal, the men of *Company F* destroyed the enemy in such numbers that once more he was forced to withdraw. One hundred thirty-seven enemy lay dead before the position; however, the company had also suffered. Only a little more than half of the original ninety-seven men were still in condition to fight. Throughout the next day, the gallant company withstood incessant hammering by enemy machine guns and mortars. Although completely surrounded and short on supplies, the company, realizing the importance of its position, prepared itself once more to withstand all the assaults the enemy could launch. Meanwhile, friendly reinforcements had moved into other commanding positions in the area and orders were issued to

the battered but unbeaten men to withdraw. At dark, on the 11th of April, under a heavy artillery barrage, the company began its movement out of the position which it had held at so great a cost. The courage of the heroic company had succeeded in destroying twice its number of enemy, had held vital terrain protecting the flanks of two Divisions and had prevented enemy interference with other friendly operations in that sector. The determination, the unflinching devotion to duty and the superb courage displayed by each man of *Company F, 136th Infantry Regiment*, were major factors in the success of operations in Northern Luzon, and are in keeping with the highest traditions of the Armed Forces of the United States.

*Company G, 136th Infantry Regiment*, is cited for outstanding performance of duty in action against the enemy during the period 20 March 1945 to 26 March 1945, on Northern Luzon, Philippine Islands. An important bridge had been blown out by an enemy demolition crew in the vicinity of Camp 3. To secure the area near the bridge in order that the engineers could construct a crossing, it was necessary to occupy high ground on both sides of the Bued River. *Company G* was given the mission of securing the right flank, by blocking the enemy movements from down the Piggan and Hill BM Middle area. In the late afternoon of 23 March 1945, the enemy made a determined attack upon the position occupied by *Company G*. They set fire to the dry cogon grass and forced temporary evacuation of the area. When the company returned, the enemy had occupied their positions and opened up with mortars, machine guns and rifles. *Company G* immediately assaulted and after a bloody, close-range fight, drove the enemy out and again occupied the position. The fight had been costly as *Company G* had suffered sixteen casualties. At 0400 on 26 March 1945, approximately fifty enemy, armed with grenades and small arms, again hit *Company G*. They were supported by long range mortars and artillery fire from enemy positions on commanding ground. Endeavoring to stop the fanatical rushes of the enemy, *Company G* brought intense protective mortar fires close in around their positions, and shelled adjacent wooded areas. Despite the wall of mortar fire, the enemy continued their charges. Finally they set fire to the cogon grass in an attempt to drive *Company G* from the security of their fox-holes and burn out machine-gun positions, but a sudden shift in the wind rendered the fire ineffectual. The men of *Company G* fought on stubbornly, hurling the enemy back each time he attacked. Not until 0700 was the attack completely repulsed. Within twenty yards of *Company G's* position, the bodies of twenty-five enemy dead, rifles, machine guns, and mortars were found. The determination, the unflinching devotion to duty and the superb courage displayed by each man of *Company G, 136th Infantry Regiment*, were major factors in the success of operations in Northern Luzon, and are in keeping with the highest traditions of the Armed Forces of the United States.

*Company I, 136th Infantry Regiment*, is cited for outstanding performance of duty in action against the enemy during the period 26 March 1945 to 28 March 1945, in the vicinity of Baguio, Northern Luzon, Philippine Islands. On 26 March 1945 our forces were making a drive on the city of Baguio in Northern Luzon, along the Kennon Road, which ran up a narrow defile bordered by towering mountains on either side. The positions of our troops were seriously

threatened by enemy forces on a well defined ridge east of the Kennon Road. This ridge was strongly fortified and was used by the enemy as a base from which to launch counterattacks on our forces. To relieve this situation, a battalion was ordered to seize this position and annihilate the enemy. *Company I*, an assault company, began its movement on the night of 25 March 1945. In order to reach positions from which it could attack, it was necessary for the company to scale the heights of a fifty-five hundred foot mountain, and then proceed down the other side to the enemy position. All that night and all the next day, the company worked its way forward despite the ever present menace of enemy observation. At 1215 hours, after thirty-six hours of movement over difficult terrain, the company found itself confronted with strong enemy positions, honeycombed with foxholes and caves, defended by a company of the enemy. Due to the nature of the terrain, it was impossible to place artillery fire on the enemy strong points located on the crest of the objective. Only 60mm mortars and light machine guns could be used in support. Later when the men of *Company I* launched their attack, they encountered the full fury of the enemy's machine guns, rifles and grenades, from concealed positions commanding the crest of the hill. At 1630 hours, after a continuous fire fight which had lasted three-and-one-half hours, *Company I* halted its attack and began reorganizing. During the night, the exhausted men were harassed by numerous infiltration attempts on the part of the enemy. On the following morning the company, with renewed determination, moved forward and secured its objective, killing over fifty-two of the enemy. The determination, the unflinching devotion to duty, and the superb courage displayed by each man of *Company I*, *136th Infantry Regiment*, contributed immeasurably to the success of operations in Northern Luzon, and are in keeping with the highest traditions of the Armed Forces of the United States.

### A NOTE ON THIS BOOK

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